Valentin Naumescu
Raluca Moldovan
Anda Ghilescu
(Editors)

THE NEW TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS AND THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE GLOBAL ORDER

Proceedings of the first edition of the international conference

The European Union's External Relations and the Global Order (EUXGLOB)

Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of European Studies
April 15, 2021

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Presa Universitară Clujeană

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Editors’ note and acknowledgements

The first edition of the international conference EUXGLOB (*The European Union’s External Relations and the Global Order*) took place on April 15, 2021. The conference was organized by the EUXGLOB Center at the Faculty of European Studies of Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj Napoca. The welcome speeches were delivered by the Rector of Babeș-Bolyai University, professor Daniel David, and the Dean of the Faculty of European Studies, associate professor Adrian Gabriel Corpădean. We were also honored that **the series of EUXGLOB Conferences was officially inaugurated by the opening speech of H.E. Klaus Werner Iohannis, the President of Romania.**

The main topic of EUXGLOB I was *The New Transatlantic Relations and the Perspectives of the Global Order*, focused on the reshaping of the ties between the US and its European allies at the start of the new Washington presidential administration, as well as on the impact that reviving this relationship has had on the strategic, political, diplomatic, military, economic, technological and cultural developments of the international order.

The conference had eight panels, corresponding to four major topics, alongside a special panel for PhD and MA students, and concluded with a roundtable bringing together high-level experts of the IEDC think tank (Initiative for European Democratic Culture). Approximately 60 participants presented papers during the conference works.

EUXGLOB I was graced by the participation of several prestigious keynote speakers. H. E. Bogdan Aurescu, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and professor of international law at the University of Bucharest’s Faculty of Law, delivered the first keynote speech of the day. The keynote speakers preceding the afternoon panels of the conference included professor Aurel Braun from the University of Toronto and the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies of Harvard University, Mr. Jamie Shea, former NATO high official, and associate professor Corneliu Bjola from

Oxford University. The Foreign Minister of Montenegro, H.E. Đorđe Radulović also delivered a speech in the first panel.

All the conference presentations emphasized and focused on the relevant changes in the international system, and on the challenges, threats and opportunities provided by this dynamic context.

This volume includes most of the presentations delivered by the participants in EUXGLOB I. We hope it will be received by specialists and policymakers as a basis for future research, publications and projects in the field of international relations.

We would like to express **special thanks to the European Commission's Representative Office in Bucharest**, which made possible the publication of the proceedings and enabled open access to the edited collection of our conference papers.

We hope to see you all on May 5-6, 2022, for EUXGLOB II!

Valentin Naumescu, Raluca Moldovan and Anda Ghilescu,
Editors

September 11, 2021

EUXGLOB I
Conference Program

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and with the collaboration of the think thank
The Initiative for European Democratic Culture (IEDC)

The International Conference
The European Union's External Relations and the Global Order (EUXGLOB)

First Edition

THE NEW TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS
AND
THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE GLOBAL ORDER

Program of the conference
Thursday, April 15, 2021

9.00 – 10.00 Opening and Keynote Address (plenary session, link 1)

- Welcoming remarks: Professor Daniel David, Rector of the Babeș-Bolyai University Associate Professor Adrian Gabriel Corpădean, Dean of the Faculty of European Studies.
- **OFFICIAL OPENING: Message of the President of Romania, H.E. Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis.**
- **Keynote speaker: H.E. Bogdan Aurescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania**, Professor at the Faculty of Law, Bucharest University: *Perspectives on the future of NATO, transatlantic relations, and global security.*

10.00 – 11.55 – Panel 1, Section 1: International cooperation and politics: challenges and opportunities. The West and the world order (link 1)

Chair: Professor Valentin Naumescu, Babeş-Bolyai University

- Mr. Đorđe Radulović, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro: *Montenegro's Path Towards the EU.*
- Mr. Charles Grant, Director of the Centre for European Reform: *The West and the world order.*
- Dr. Tom Casier, Director of the Global Europe Centre, University of Kent: *Contesting Western hegemony and the future of the global order.*
- Professor Radu Carp, Bucharest University: *The US – EU partnership – current perspectives and challenges.*
- Mr. Nicolae Ștefănuță, Member of the European Parliament, Renew Europe Group: *Democracy in shambles.*
- Mr. Jim Cloos, Secretary General of Trans European Policy Studies Association, Former DG for General and Institutional Policies at the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU: *How to reconcile strategic autonomy and international cooperation.*

10.00 – 11.55 – Panel 2, Section 1: International cooperation and politics: challenges and opportunities. The West and the world order (link 2)

Chair: Associate Professor Raluca Moldovan, Babeș-Bolyai University

- Associate Professor Liviu Țîrău, Babeș-Bolyai University: *Two ongoing crises: transatlantic ties and the EU-Russia relations.*
- Associate Professor Georgiana Ciceo, Babeș-Bolyai University: *The capability expectation gap of EU's strategic autonomy ambition.*
- Ms. Diana Peca, Executive Director of the Department of Asian Studies, Romanian-American University Bucharest: *The Coordinates of the Economic and*

Political Relations between Japan, China and South Korea. Implications for the relation with the United States of America and the European Union.

- Ms. Eni Lamçe, PhD Researcher, University of Vienna: *Main securitizing and de-securitizing actors of the OSCE debate in the Western Balkan region.*
- Professor Gabriela Chefneux, Transilvania University of Brașov: *Metaphors in International Cooperation.*
- Lecturer Dorin Popescu, President of the Black Sea House Association, Constanța: *Black Sea – Black swans at the horizon line.*

10.00 – 11.55 – Panel 3, Section Students: MA Students (link 3)

Chair: Ms. Anda Ghilescu, PhD Candidate, Babeș-Bolyai University

- Ms. Caloianu Ana Maria Florina, MA Student, Babeș-Bolyai University: *Piracy in Africa's waters: uniting EU and NATO against a common goal.*
- Ms. Stoicescu Maria-Mihaela, MA Student, Oil and Gas University of Ploiești: *Looking beyond the wall: Immigration and cultural identity in the relation between Post-Trump America and Europe.*
- Ms. Moiș Diana-Cristina, MA Student, Babeș-Bolyai University: *The Coordination between the European External Action Service and the National Ministries of Foreign Affairs.*
- Ms. Ruști Ionela, MA Student, Babeș-Bolyai University: *The European Union and its Role in International Humanitarian Action: An Evolution of Shared Security Concepts, Legal Instruments and Peace-keeping Operations.*
- Mr. Iulian Paul Paladic, MA Student, Babeș-Bolyai University: *The resources, the new silk roads and the South China's Sea.*
- Mr. Ștefan-Ioan Cianga, MA Student, Babeș-Bolyai University: *Turkey's New Strategic Outlook and NATO. A Neoclassical Realist Approach.*
- Mr. Mihai-Emilian Ivanov, MA Student, Babeș-Bolyai University: *The impact of Monetary Policy, Easing financial conditions and "Helicopter Money" on contemporary markets and politics*.
- Mr. Bogdan Adrian Ionuț, BA Student, Babeș-Bolyai University: *Between Russian and Chinese expansionism, NATO and its challenges.*

12.00 – 13.55 – Panel 4, Section 2: Perspectives on the future of NATO and global security (link 1)

Chair: Professor Sergiu Mișcoiu, Babeș-Bolyai University

- Professor Roberta N. Haar, Maastricht University: *Transatlantic relations under a new U.S. presidency.*
- Professor Valentin Naumescu, Babeș-Bolyai University: *Post-Trump Implications in the US and European Security Debates. Good news and bad news.*

- Associate Professor Armand Goșu, Bucharest University: *Russian foreign policy – between tradition and innovation.*
- Mr. Andrei Enghiș, Directorate-General for Informatics, European Commission: *EU-NATO, an everlasting partnership.*
- Dr. Agnes Nicolescu, Aspen Institute Romania alumna, *Security perception narrative in the UK in a post-Brexit context.*
- Professor Sergiu Mișcoiu and Ms. Andreea Urs, PhD candidate, Babeș-Bolyai University: *The West's return to the Heart of Africa: Political Opportunities and Security Dilemmas.*

12.00 – 13.55 – Panel 5, Section 4: Liberal or illiberal? Culture and society in Europe and North America between radicalism, ideological polarization and new hopes (link 2)

Chair: Lecturer Gabriel Gherasim, Babeș-Bolyai University

- Associate Professor Bezen Coşkun, Director of the İzmir Policy Centre: *Social Movements, Culture and Society in Europe and the US: Yellow Vests and Black Lives Matter.*
- Lecturer Șerban Văetiși, Babeș-Bolyai University: *The failure of the post-racial model in the West. Causes, practices and consequences.*
- Lecturer Gabriel Gherasim, Babeș-Bolyai University: *The Entrepreneurial Logic of Trumpism in Retrospect.*
- Dr. Nicolae Țîbrigan, Institute of Political Science and International Relations "Ion I.C. Bratianu" of the Romanian Academy: *Integration of National Minorities – Optimization Perspectives of Gagauz Political Integration in Republic of Moldova.*
- Assistant Professor Lyubomir Stefanov, New Bulgarian University Sofia: *The New "Normal" in Politics.*
- Mr. Bogdan Mureșan, Expert at the European Institute of Romania: *Democracy protection and the European Union: between normative ambitions and hard realities.*

12.00 – 13.55 – Panel 6, Section 1: International cooperation and politics: challenges and opportunities. The West and the world order (link 3)

Chair: Lecturer Ana Pantea, Babeș-Bolyai University

- Professor Heinz Gaertner, University of Vienna, International Institute for Peace: *What does Biden's presidency mean for multilateralism?*
- Associate Professor Ștefan Popescu, National School of Political and Administrative Studies Bucharest: *Back to Monnet's method? The political and strategic autonomy dimensions of the EU's new industrial strategy.*
- Associate Professor Raluca Moldovan, Babeș-Bolyai University: *Rethinking American foreign policy in the Middle East: The priorities of the new Biden administration.*

- Lecturer Ana Pantea, Babeș-Bolyai University: *After Myanmar coup: The (Un)changing Interests of the Great Powers in the Development of Myanmar.*
- Assistant Professor Mirela Mărcuț, University of Oradea: *A Global Digital Rulebook? Assessing the Potential for a Strategic Partnership between the US and EU in Digital Policy.*
- Dr. Oana Poiană, European Research Institute: *Strategic autonomy and political actorness in East Central Europe: The case of the Three Seas Initiative.*

13.55 – 15.00 – LUNCH BREAK

15.00 – 16.30 – Afternoon Keynote Speeches (plenary session, link 1)

Chair: Professor Valentin Naumescu, Babeș-Bolyai University

- Professor Aurel Braun, University of Toronto and Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University: *NATO as the Necessary Pillar of 21st Century Global Security.*
- Professor Jamie Shea, former NATO official, University of Exeter: *NATO's 2021 Strategic Concept.*
- Associate Professor Corneliu Bjola, Oxford University: *Digital sovereignty and the transatlantic relations: challenges and opportunities.*

16.30 – 18.15 – Panel 7, Section 3: Hard and soft power today. A new geoeconomic context (link 2)

Chair: Mr. Andrei Ștefan Enghiș, The European Commission

- Lecturer Antonia Colibășanu, National School of Political and Administrative Studies Bucharest: *Contemporary geopolitics and geoeconomics – an analysis framework.*
- Dr. Richard Weitz, Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute: *Arms Control in the Biden Era.*
- Mr. Cristian Bordei, Senator, Member of the Committee for Foreign Affairs of the Parliament of Romania: *The Regionalisation and the new politics of Political globalization.*
- Mr. Iulian Mareș, President of the Balkan Development Support: *The First Challenge.*
- Assistant Professor Adrian-Daniel Stan, Babeș-Bolyai University, Dr. Brîndușa-Nicoleta Pincu: *European external governance in action, how will Ukraine walk the long road to economic integration within the DCFTA?*
- Dr. Iulia Anamaria Ghidiu, Associate Member at the European Research Institute: *Soft Power Perspectives: Popularity of a New Transatlantic Erasmus among the Romanian Youth.*

16.30 – 18.15 – Panel 8, Section Students: PhD Students (link 3)

Chair: Dr. Agnes Nicolescu, Babeș-Bolyai University

- Ms. Ioana-Constantin Bercean, PhD Candidate, Babeș-Bolyai University: *Iran's National Security Debate and its Implications for Future Negotiations With US.*
- Ms. Anda Ghilescu, PhD Candidate, Babeș-Bolyai University: *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict between the Trump and the Biden Administrations.*
- Mr. Gabriel V. Danci, PhD Candidate, Babeș-Bolyai University: *The New Geopolitics of the Middle East and the Scramble for Hydrogen*.
- Ms. Diana-Nicoleta Petruț, MA Graduate, Babeș-Bolyai University: *The European Union's Global Strategy: Priorities regarding Latin America and the Caribbean.*
- Ms. Tana Alexandra Foarfă, PhD Candidate, Babeș-Bolyai University: *Transatlantic relations post COVID-19 – ensuring democratic resilience?*
- Mr. Cătălin-Gabriel Done, PhD Candidate, University of Naples "Federico II": *Europeanization in the Context of Global Crises.*

18.30 – 20.00 – IEDC Round Table – "The Transatlantic Alliance: Advancing NATO, Reinforcing EU-US Partnership, Facing Together the Global Contest" (plenary session, link 1)

The *Initiative for European Democratic Culture (IEDC)* think tank experts will assemble for a strategic-based conversation on how to boost the opportunities of a new transatlantic agenda and to face the challenges posed by authoritarian regimes to the Western World.

Moderator: Mr. Robert Lupițu, Editor-in-chief Caleaeuropeana.ro

Participants:

- Professor Valentin Naumescu, Babeș-Bolyai University, President of IEDC
- Professor Radu Carp, Bucharest University
- Mr. Nicolae Ștefănuță, Member of the European Parliament
- Associate Professor Raluca Moldovan, Babeș-Bolyai University
- Associate Professor Iulian Fota, Director of the Romanian Diplomatic Institute
- Lecturer Dorin Popescu, geopolitical analyst, President of the Black Sea House Constanța
- Mr. Andrei Ştefan Enghiş, the European Commission

The message of the President of Romania, H.E. Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis,

on the occasion
of the first EUXGLOB International Conference
"The New Transatlantic Relations
and the Perspectives of the Global Order"
(April 15, 2021)

Distinguished speakers and participants,

The today's first edition of this series offers a unique opportunity to discuss a highly topical subject.

Let me from the outset commend the Faculty of European Studies of the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, and Professor Naumescu for this timely initiative.

This conference takes place at the most appropriate moment as, with a new Administration in Washington, the decision-makers on both sides of the Atlantic are currently working diligently on renewing and strengthening the transatlantic partnership.

We, in the EU, are encouraged by the positive signals received from Washington so far, and **feel determined to continue our efforts in favor of giving a new impetus to the transatlantic relationship**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me briefly touch upon the international context and the dynamics inside the transatlantic relations in the current global construct.

It is already clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has become a defining factor in international politics. As unprecedented as it has been, its economic, political and social impact appears to **encourage certain existing trends and to confirm the arrival of a system-changing moment**. By now, we can note that COVID-19 has brought along both opportunities and challenges.

Indeed, many have come to view this pandemic as a chance for working together, showing solidarity and building resilience. Others have limited themselves to seeing it as a sheer means to advance individualistic and narrow agendas, which negatively influence the current international order.

Therefore, the transatlantic partners need to think together about the future of the international order, and act jointly to preserve it and make it more efficient.

Indeed, the reflection processes seeking to consolidate and outline the strategic approach – of both NATO and the European Union – to new realities and emerging challenges are ongoing. **NATO is about to decide on updating its Strategic Concept, while the EU is close to launching its Conference on the future of Europe**.

In this context, **a reliable and solid transatlantic partnership is both central in this enterprise, and a precondition for success.**

There are **topics of acute interest on both sides of the Atlantic**, such as addressing the pandemic and the economic recovery, the rules-based international order, fighting terrorism and the new hybrid threats, combating climate change, advancing digitalization and new technologies. In other areas, the European Union and the US have more nuanced interests and policy options.

However, there is more than enough room to agree on convergent strategic approaches. Among these, one can mention the reform of the multilateral bodies, such as the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization, the relation with some international or regional actors, cybersecurity, the resilience of supply chains, combating disinformation, and so forth.

In the global competition ahead, **the European Union and the US must uphold their shared values and principles** in the face of challengers who see the authoritarian practices as more effective. Formats such as the G7 and G20, as well as European and Euro-Atlantic initiatives like the Alliance for Multilateralism and the Community of Democracies are useful in this respect, since a reformed and strengthened multilateralism is essential to the global peace and prosperity.

As a country which assumed the mandate of Presidency of the Community of Democracies thirty years following its return to the community of values to which it rightfully belongs, **Romania welcomes the US' renewed interest in this direction and supports President Biden's proposal for a Summit of Democracies**.

At the same time, **the European Union and the US should build coalitions with like-minded partners in order to help generate inclusive and integrated solutions**. Such coalitions can provide added value in geostrategic areas like the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East and Africa, where there is much interest and a need for a better EU-US coordination. Romania is directly interested in a close EU-US **cooperation on regional issues** pertaining to the Black Sea region, the Eastern Neighborhood and the Western Balkans.

In this challenging global environment, the European Union and the US **must also prioritize increasing their strategic resilience**. Ways to achieve this include, notably, **reducing and eventually eliminating dependencies on third actors that do not share our values and interests**.

A **stronger EU-US economic cooperation and an increased investment in connectivity projects** would help attain this goal as well as the economic recovery. In this context, the **Three Seas Initiative** can have a major impact on the implementation of the connectivity projects in Central and Eastern Europe, with clear benefits for the participating states to the Initiative, and also for the EU and the US, which has been involved in this project from its inception.

In this context, I welcome the renewed commitment of the new US Administration to further develop the Three Seas Initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the security front, **NATO is a crucial component of the complex transatlantic relationship**. Its ongoing Reflection Process – NATO 2030 – confirms already that the transatlantic link will remain the foundation of the Alliance.

This Process is also an occasion to build an even stronger and more efficient NATO, able to tackle a wealth of security challenges, including the

newly emerging ones. Such challenges can cover, among others, the ones stemming from Russia's assertive policies and posture or from terrorism, protracted conflicts fueling regional instability, as well as hybrid and cyber threats.

They all require **transatlantic unity and cooperation**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Romania has been and remains **an active promoter of an ever stronger transatlantic partnership**.

Let us be clear: together with the promotion of efficient multilateralism, the rule of law, democracy and human rights, respect of international law, and increasing the strategic resilience in the Euro-Atlantic space alongside our Allies and like-minded partners, a strong transatlantic partnership is the prerequisite for preserving a world in which our values and way of life prevail!

In closing, let me wish you a fruitful exchange of ideas and thank you for your kind attention!

Perspectives on the Future of NATO, Transatlantic Relations, and Global Security

Keynote opening speech by
BOGDAN AURESCU,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania
at the first edition of the International Conference
The European Union's External Relations and the Global Order (EUXGLOB) – The New Transatlantic Relations and the Perspectives of the Global Order
April 15, 2021

Thank you so much, Mr. Dean,
Professor Naumescu,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning!

I am very enthusiastic to attend this event and I will join President Iohannis in commending Professor Naumescu and the organizers for the substantial first edition of this annual conference. I am confident that this event will become a well-acknowledged landmark in addressing the most salient issues of international relations.

Today, I will address a very relevant topic – the enduring value of the transatlantic link and the prospects for the future of the Alliance. This discussion touches upon the very core of the strategic conceptual triad of Romania's foreign policy or – as I called it some time ago – the "golden triangle" of our foreign policy objectives: increasing Romania's role and profile within the European Union and NATO, respectively, strengthening and expanding the Strategic Partnership with the United States. These three pillars are consistent with the transversal, deep and consistent attachment of

our country to multilateralism, international law and the rules-based international order.

Building on President Iohannis' assessment on the international context and the dynamics within transatlantic relations, we are indeed at an inflection point for recalibrating our strategic approach. Indeed, as the past years have revealed, there is not only an increase and multiplication of risks and threats of a diverse, unprecedented nature, such as hybrid, cyber or disinformation, but also our shared vulnerability.

The COVID-19 pandemic was another strong reminder of the importance of multilateral cooperation in addressing global challenges, the importance of a rules-based international order and the need to build up our strategic resilience.

Nevertheless, as Mr. President's message affirmed earlier, we should see in this dynamic not only challenges, but also opportunities and time for reflection followed by action. Now is the time to step up Transatlantic unity and cooperation and have a more strategic Transatlantic approach on current challenges.

It is, thus, only natural, that I firstly refer to the North Atlantic Alliance, which is a sine qua non component of the Transatlantic relationship. For more than 7 decades, NATO has been at the foundation of the Transatlantic security – an Alliance passing the test of longevity and with the ability to keep the spirit of consensus sworn in in 1949. An Alliance able to preserve peace and security on our continent and across the Atlantic. Able to keep us united and to look beyond its borders, and projecting stability to help others.

For Romania, which recently marked 17 years since NATO membership, the accession to the most important and successful political-military Alliance in history meant the beginning of a well-deserved and natural return to the community of values we have always belonged to.

But what is the situation now?

The future of transatlantic and global security will be complicated and difficult, unless we put more emphasis on cooperation, dialogue and respect for the rule of law and international norms and principles. To

promote all these, we need to preserve and strengthen our alliances and our communities. So, NATO will remain an essential Alliance. One which needs to effectively fulfill its core missions, while becoming more able to contribute to global peace and security.

Since the latest Summit in London, NATO has started a new reflection process, coordinated by the Secretary General under the concept NATO2030, a process aimed at strengthening the political dimension of the Alliance, crystallizing a vision for the future of NATO and ultimately leading to the elaboration of a new Strategic Concept. I am glad that in November 2019, I was the first Allied minister of foreign affairs to propose the elaboration of a New Strategic Concept, based on the reflection process later started at the London Summit.

We need to design the future of our Alliance in a pro-active manner for the upcoming generations, meaningful for its member states and for their population. We have to acknowledge that there are challenges which go beyond borders, and this means investing in a stronger military, but, most importantly, increasing the resilience of our societies, improving defense innovation, doing more research, countering hybrid and non-conventional threats like sophisticated cyber-attacks, but also stimulating a more energetic joint work between NATO and the EU.

As it has done several times in its history, the Alliance reflects, decides and adapts – to remain a fit-for-purpose organization. And as we could see, including at the Foreign Ministerial meeting this March, this is still the case. The Alliance remains strong and determined to further adapt and prepare firm responses to the challenges it confronts, now and in the future.

In order to do this, Romania envisages a set of priorities:

First, NATO needs to further consolidate its deterrence and defense posture. Why? Because, it is obvious, Russia continues its aggressive actions, building up its military presence in the Black Sea, using hybrid and cyber tactics, propaganda and disinformation and, most recently, massing more of its troops in Crimea and in the vicinity of Ukraine. Such significant troop movements close to the border of another country are worrisome, especially in the context of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

The NATO allies have discussed yesterday evening this matter during the Extraordinary Meeting of the foreign and defense ministers, which I attended together with the Minister of Defense, Mr. Ciucă. So it is clear that we need to strengthen deterrence and defense at the Black Sea. A lot has been done and we are very grateful to our Allies for helping us with planes and ships to ensure air policing and maritime presence. We would like to welcome more Allies contributing to our multinational brigade and the NATO headquarters on our territory, to make this force stronger and fit for all circumstances. We look forward to further Allied presence to safeguard the security of our airspace and sea, together with us. We also need to enhance our dialogue and cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine on the security of the Black Sea region. And we should remain firm in not recognizing any violations of territorial integrity in the region.

In the current regional security context, next week I will host an important meeting of the trilateral format on security issues with Poland and Turkey. Together with my colleagues from Poland and Turkey, my fellow foreign ministers, we have invited our close partners Ukraine and Georgia in order to discuss issues of high joint interest, especially the regional security evolutions and the perspectives of the NATO Summit this summer.

NATO needs to be able to ensure collective defense at its best. We are in the process of articulating a united, solid and effective defense system from the Atlantic to the Baltic, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Again, a lot has been done, but a lot still remains. Romania contributes significantly to this process, including by hosting the Forward Presence in the Southern Part of the Eastern Flank and by ensuring 2% of GDP, actually this year is 2,07%, for defense each year for the past five years now.

Secondly, we have to deepen our security consultations within the Alliance. There is a great potential untapped here. We discussed this at the Foreign Ministerial meeting this March, and all Allies are in agreement in this respect – NATO's role, to be the forum of first choice for transatlantic security consultations among its members, will be re-energized. And as I have already mentioned, just yesterday we had an extraordinary jumbo NATO ministerial meeting, at the level of ministers of defense and foreign affairs, with the participation of US State Secretary Blinken and Defense

Secretary Lloyd Austin, and this kind of close dialogue will make us stronger. Yesterday, we have assessed the situation in Afghanistan and decided to start the withdrawal of the US and Resolute Support Mission forces by the 1st of May. And, as I have already mentioned, we have also discussed the worrying situation in and around Ukraine. On that occasion, I have expressed Romania's support for Ukraine's integrity and sovereignty, and I have underlined the necessity for the Alliance to continue reinforcing our defense and deterrence on the Eastern Flank, at the Black Sea.

Thirdly, we will further deepen and expand our partnerships. We continue to cherish and nourish our partnerships, be they in our East, in the South or in the Far East. We need to talk more and do more with our partners, including, for example, by helping them build their own capacities for defense.

The partnership with the European Union is essential and has a lot of potential. As both organizations develop strategic visions for their future, NATO, with its NATO2030 process, and the incoming negotiations on the new Strategic Concept, the EU, with the incoming start of the Conference for the Future of Europe, we should use this momentum to further deepen cooperation, while avoiding competition and duplications.

We believe that NATO should undertake a significant, long-term effort at stabilizing its neighborhood, in concert and in dialogue with the United Nations, the European Union, OSCE and regional partners and organizations. This is long overdue.

In Europe, there are still countries that fight for their own survival, for their own territorial integrity and sovereignty. We see this in Georgia, Ukraine, in the Republic of Moldova, where protracted conflicts poison the security climate. Helping these countries strengthen their defense and security systems is an important undertaking, where NATO and the European Union could do more together, by joining forces and resources.

These protracted conflicts have persisting consequences, affecting the security and stability of the region and of the Euro-Atlantic space. The transatlantic community should re-focus on the resolution of these conflicts. The EU should also re-energize its involvement in tackling protracted conflicts in the Eastern Neighborhood and the Black Sea region, as Romania proposed last November, through the common letter which I addressed to

the High Representative Borrell, signed together with other ten EU Member States' foreign ministers. This aspect is constantly promoted by our country, for addressing the arch of instability in the Black Sea region.

Fourth, fighting terrorism remains a priority for the future, especially in the Southern neighborhood. The Alliance has managed to develop in the past years a substantial approach towards the South. We have forged partnerships with states in the Mediterranean and the Gulf region through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and the Mediterranean Dialogue. Plans have been developed to defend and counter involvement of non-state actors. Projects to modernize defense capabilities and increase resilience have been provided to Iraq, Jordan and Tunisia. Expertise is being channeled through the Regional Centre in Kuwait. The Alliance needs to continue and expand this work, based on partners' needs, in consultation and complementarity with other stakeholders.

Fifth, strategic resilience of our critical systems: hybrid and cyber-attacks on our infrastructure, political systems and economic processes have demonstrated the need for NATO to do more in this regard. Romania is ready to participate through its initiative of hosting the Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience, open to EU and NATO member states, as well as for partners. The Centre will manage various programs meant to advance resilience initiatives through three pillars: risk mitigation through anticipation and adaptation; development of analytical tools and best practices; practical cooperation on education, training and joint exercises.

Sixth, helping countries cope with the consequences of natural disasters or other types of civilian emergencies will remain an important dimension of NATO's mission. In the past year, the Alliance has done a lot to ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic would not spill over and develop as a security crisis. NATO coordinated requests and offers of assistance and created a NATO Pandemic Response Trust Fund to maintain a stockpile of medical equipment and supplies. Military forces from NATO Allies were used to transport medical personnel and equipment, build field hospitals and treatment beds. Testing laboratories were shipped to detect the transmission of the virus. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of

North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Tunisia, Iraq and Afghanistan were among the beneficiaries. Romania was the first Ally to use the Strategic Airlift Capability of NATO to bring medical supplies.

Seventh, emerging technologies: the Alliance must stay ahead of technological developments, through research and cooperation, and counter any attempt to use them in a negative manner.

To deal with all these challenges, Transatlantic unity, consensus and cooperation remain as important as ever, now and in the future. The Secretary General reports, in his annual survey, that 2020 marked the sixth consecutive year of growth in defense spending by European Allies and Canada, with an increase in real terms of 3.9% from 2019 to 2020. And according to the latest surveys of Allied security perceptions across all NATO member states, the transatlantic bond continues to be rated highly important among people in dealing with security challenges: 79% consider the relationship between North America and Europe as important.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As Mr. President's message mentioned earlier, the new Administration in Washington offers a window of opportunity for renewing and strengthening the Transatlantic partnership. The strategic cooperation between Romania and the United States is at the highest level of excellence. This year we mark a decade since the adoption of the Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century between Romania and the United States and since the entry into force of the Agreement between the Romania and United States on the deployment of the US Ballistic Missile Defense System in Romania, both documents which I had the honor to negotiate on behalf of Romania. This May we will also mark five years since the Ballistic Missile Defense site in Deveselu reached full operational capability and was integrated in the NATO System, which is a symbolic project for our joint Euro-Atlantic security.

After a short meeting in the margins of the NATO ministerial last month, two weeks ago I had a 40-minutes phone call with Secretary Blinken to discuss the main lines of development for our Strategic Partnership and I can say now confidently that our Strategic Partnership is on a very good track. Indeed, our Strategic Partnership with the United States is built on

mutual trust, credibility, predictability and shared values and interests, which proved to be crucial in adapting to the evolutions of the global and regional environment. As a single community of values and security, we will continue to work together with our most important Strategic Partner for consolidating the Transatlantic link, both within NATO and in other formats, including by actively supporting, as Presidency of the Community of Democracies, the organization of the Global Summit for Democracy, which President Biden wants to organize by the end of this year or the beginning of next year.

I will close my remarks with these positive perspectives and the firm belief that together, we, the Euro-Atlantic community, will bring substantial contributions to regional and global security, and ensure stability and well-being for our people.

I thank you for your attention and wish you very good discussions. I hope to see you at next editions and I convey, once again, my congratulations to the organizers, especially to my good friend, Professor Naumescu, who put together this project. Thank you.

The European Union's Quest for Digital Sovereignty and Its Implications for the Transatlantic Relationship

CORNELIU BJOLA

Discussions in European policy-making circles surrounding the concept of digital sovereignty have intensified in the past few years and for good reasons. The concept has been forcefully advocated for some time by the French President, Emmanuel Macron, as a possible solution to advancing EU's tech capacity and curbing its reliance on U.S. companies.[1] It has been also mentioned by the President of the European Commission, Ursula Gertrud von der Leyen, in her 2020 State of the Union Address, as an element of the EU strategy to develop a more coherent European approach to connectivity and digital infrastructure deployment.[2] The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic further strengthened the conviction of the EU German Presidency in the validity of the concept: "Europe must bolster its digital sovereignty to effectively respond to future challenges, guarantee livelihoods and ensure the security of its citizens."[3]

The sense of urgency accompanying the statements made by European officials is hardly coincidental. It reveals the growing anxiety felt by EU policy makers that in a world increasing shaped by the geopolitical and technological competition between the United States and China, the EU risks being left out. Digital sovereignty has thus emerged as a powerful conceptual 'anchor' around which competing visions of EU digital strategic thinking are being articulated, but the constitutive elements holding the

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1 CPI, "France's Macron Wants Digital Sovereignty for Europe," December 10, 2020, https://www.competitionpolicyinternational.com/frances-macron-wants-digital-sovereignty-for-europe/.

2 The European Commission, "State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary," September 16, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_ 20_1655.

3 EU2020, "Expanding the EU's Digital Sovereignty," https://www.eu2020.de/eu2020-en/eu-digitalisation-technology-sovereignty/2352828.

'anchor' together are less clear. The goal of this contribution is therefore twofold: to unpack the epistemic attributes of the concept and to explore its possible ramifications for the EU's diplomatic standing, especially in its relationship with the United States (US). To this end, it will be argued that EU's projections of digital sovereignty are yet to fully take shape and they are unlikely to disrupt the transatlantic relationship. EU's data governance plans are relatively more advanced, partially due to the extra-jurisdictional effect that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has started to generate. Ambitious new proposals for improving the EU technological capacity have been also added to EU's digital agenda, but their implementation is likely to take time.

Conceptually speaking, digital sovereignty has been primarily referred to in the context of debates around the design of IT architecture and/or laws applicable to data processing.[4] It therefore contains two key components: *data and technological sovereignty* (see Fig. 1). The guiding principle of the former is that state jurisdiction ought to be extended over the governance of data flows that is, of how data generated by citizens and public institutions is stored, processed, and accessed within the territory of the implementing country or group of countries. The number of policy measures restricting cross border data transfers has grown, for instance, from nearly zero in 1960 to around 90 in 2017.[5] These measures vary based on factors including the type of data in question (e.g., health-related personal data), the purposes for which the data can be used (e.g., commercial, academic research, public policy), and the degree to which the legislation of the recipient country is aligned to that of the implementing country. Technological sovereignty, on the other hand, focuses on infrastructure, innovation, and other technology-driven elements of the digital agenda.[6] While encouraging local tech capacity growth via ambitious tools of

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4 Patrik Hummel et al., "Data Sovereignty: A Review," *Big Data & Society* 8, no. 1 (2021), https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951720982012.

5 Martina Ferracane, "Restrictions on Cross-Border Data Flows: A Taxonomy," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3089956.

6 Frances G. Burwell and Kenneth Propp, "The Rise of Digital Sovereignty," *The Atlantic Council*, 2020, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/The-European-Union-and-the-Search-for-Digital-Sovereignty-Building-Fortress-Europe-or-Preparing-for-a-New-World.pdf, 1.

industrial policy, technological sovereignty also seeks to extend state control, via investment screening and export control, over technologies (e.g., 5G, cloud computing) that are required to building digital infrastructures.

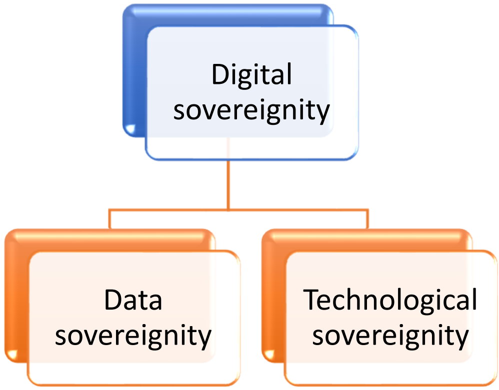


Fig. 1. Digital sovereignty – key components

Conceptions of EU digital sovereignty encompass both dimensions (data and technological sovereignty), but with slightly different weights. Following the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation by the European Commission in 2016, new mechanisms have been put in place to ensure the protection of data of European citizens in foreign jurisdictions. Adequacy decisions and Standard Contractual Clauses (SCC) are, for instance, two instruments used by the European Commission to allow for personal data to flow from the EU to third countries (Canada, Iceland, UK, Switzerland, New Zealand, etc.) without any further safeguards. The legal basis for such data sharing agreements is that the country outside the EU is expected to offer an adequate level of data protection, similar or at least aligned with GDPR provisions.[7] The Privacy Shield framework established by the US and the EU in 2016 was expected to do exactly that. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) invalidated, however, the agreement in 2020 on grounds that U.S. law enforcement and national security powers conflicted

[7] The European Commission, "Adequacy Decision," https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/international-dimension-data-protection/adequacy-decisions_en, last accessed August 10, 2021.

with EU data protection requirements.[8] A new framework is being currently negotiated by the Biden Administration and the EU,[9] but the issue provides a tangible illustration of how fast data sovereignty has advanced on the EU's diplomatic agenda and how it has already started to influence EU's political and economic relationship with close allies and partners.

Another important application of EU's approach to data sovereignty is the projected establishment of nine *common European data spaces (*ranging from industry to energy, and from health to the European Green Deal), which are designed to facilitate the use of data for innovative business ideas in compliance with applicable personal data protection, consumer protection and competition laws.[10] The immediate objective of the proposal is to improve the flow of data across sectors and Member States and enable the formation of a European single data market. More strategically, data spaces are expected to enable the generation of large, secure, and robust datasets, which are critically necessary for European AI technology to develop. This will allow, in turn, the EU to catch up and compete more vigorously with tech superpowers like the US or China. Complementary to EU efforts, Germany and France launched in October 2019 the GAIA-X project, a "federated, open data infrastructure based on European values," which seeks to connect cloud providers around Europe.[11] EU efforts to develop its digital single market has prompted no official reaction from the Biden Administration thus far, but US business has voiced concerns about the possibility of mandates governing data sharing in the EU to negatively affect

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8 William Alan Reinsch and Isabella Frymoyer, "Transatlantic Data Flows: Permanently Broken or Temporarily Fractured?," August 31, 2020, https://www.csis.org/analysis/transatlantic-data-flows-permanently-broken-or-temporarily-fractured.

9 Vincent Manancourt, "Biden Seeks High-Level Data Deal to Repair EU-US Digital Ties," *Politico*, June 2, 2021, https://www.politico.eu/article/joe-biden-data-transfers-privacy-shield-eu-transatlantic/.

10 Mayer Brown, "The European Commission Proposes the creation of a Single European Data Space," March 30, 2020, https://www.mayerbrown.com/en/perspectives-events/publications/2020/03/the-european-commission-proposes-the-creation-of-a-single-european-data-space.

11 "GAIA-X: A Federated Data Infrastructure for Europe," https://www.data-infrastructure.eu/GAIAX/ Navigation/EN/Home/home.html, last accessed August 10, 2021.

U.S. companies, which are so heavily invested in Europe.[12] If so, they predict, new tensions in the transatlantic relation may emerge as EU's pursuit of data sovereignty might affect the ability of US companies to operate competitively in the European data marketplace.

On the technological side of digital sovereignty, EU has focused on developing secure and sustainable digital infrastructures through a combination of strategic actions: improved connectivity via "open" 5G networks, the repatriation of the semiconductor production capacity, robust investment in edge and cloud computing, and the acceleration of quantum computing research and start-ups.[13] Unlike the case of data sovereignty which mainly requires regulatory action to come into effect, technological sovereignty is more difficult to achieve in the absence of a robust tech industrial capacity. 66 percent of the European cloud market is controlled, for instance, by US tech companies like Amazon, Microsoft, and Google.[14] Among the top 20 digital companies in 2019 according to Forbes, only one was a European company, Deutsche Telekom, on the 19th position. The rest were based in the US (12), China (3), Japan (2), South Korea (1) and Taiwan (1).[15] It has been also estimated that of the €25 billion total investment in AI and blockchain technologies each year, the US and China account for more than 80%, while the EU's share only amounts to 7% or about €1.75 billion.[16] In sum, the EU is facing serious challenges in implementing its vision of technological sovereignty, but the strategy it has put in place is supposed to make these challenges more manageable in medium term.

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12 Peter Chase, Jonas Keck and Margaret Van Scoy, "Data Access as the Next Transatlantic Digital Battleground," *German Marshall Fund,* 2021, https://www.gmfus.org/news/data-access-next-transatlantic-digital-battleground.

13 The European Commission, "Europe's Digital Decade: Digital Targets for 2030," March 9, 2021 https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en.

14 Natalie Bannerman, "Amazon, Microsoft and Google Dominate European Cloud Market," *Capacity Media*, January 18, 2021, https://www.capacitymedia.com/articles/3827441/amazon-microsoft-and-google-dominate-european-cloud-market.

15 Forbes, "Top 100 Digital Companies," 2019, https://www.forbes.com/top-digital-companies/list/.

16 Mathieu Pollet, "EU Faces €5-10 Billion Investment Gap on AI and Blockchain," EuroActiv, June 2, 2021, https://www.euractiv.com/section/digital/news/eu-faces-e5-10-billion-investment-gap-on-ai-and-blockchain-report/.

The relative weakness of the EU tech sector is bound to intensify EU's aspirations for technological sovereignty, which in turn may further amplify tensions within the transatlantic relationship. The key issue to observe is the scale and intensity with which EU will seek to reduce its dependency on US tech companies. Two battles are emerging on the horizon, taxation of digital services, and to a lesser extent, government procurement. EU's proposal for taxing digital services would enable Member States to tax profits that are generated in their territory, even if a company does not have a physical presence there. In so doing, the EU seeks to ensure that online businesses contribute to public finances at the same level as traditional 'brick-and-mortar' companies.[17] The proposal was expected to be adopted in the first part of the 2021, but in a gesture of goodwill to the Biden Administration, the EU decided to postpone discussions on the digital levy and concentrate instead on finalizing G20 efforts on a planned global minimum tax rate.[18] Government procurement, on the other hand, would place restrictions on the national origins of the hardware, software, and digital services used by governments in Europe. Citing security concerns, the European Commission has called on Member States to exclude high-risk vendors from critical or sensitive parts of their 5G networks. While this measure primarily targets Chinese companies, like Huawei, European governments have also become sensitive to the risks of utilizing foreign software in processing public data. Following the Snowden revelations about the US foreign surveillance activities, the German government cancelled a contract with Verizon, a US company, to supply telecommunications services to a number of German federal agencies.[19]

To conclude, the EU has little choice other than to continue pursuing its aspirations of digital sovereignty. Normative concerns involving the access and use of public data by tech companies drive forward its push for data sovereignty, while the weakness of the European tech sector has intensified calls for measures that can create "a level playing field" with US

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[17] The European Commission, "Digital Taxation: Commission Proposes New Measures to Ensure that All Companies Pay Fair Tax in the EU," March 21, 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/ detail/en/IP_18_2041.

[18] Euronews, "The US has Reportedly Pushed the EU to Delay its New Digital Services Tax," June 30, 2021, https://www.euronews.com/next/2021/06/30/the-us-has-reportedly-pushed-the-eu-to-delay-its-new-digital-services-tax.

[19] Burwell and Propp, "The Rise of Digital Sovereignty," 7.

tech giants. Diplomatic frictions within the transatlantic relationship are inevitable as the US government will likely seek to protect US tech companies against practices (data governance, digital levy, government procurement) that are perceived to dilute their global competitiveness. That being said, these frictions are unlikely to disrupt relations between the two allies, unless the US will seek to return after the presidential elections in 2024 to the inward-looking and EU-bashing rhetoric of the "America First" doctrine. The recent launch of the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) is however a sign of the relationship evolving in the right direction. TTC will focus on developing common approaches and strengthening the cooperation between US and the EU on wide range of issues, including data governance and technology platforms, the misuse of technology threatening security and human rights, export controls, and investment screening.[20] In so doing, TTC will not able help assist the EU and US overcome differences over the issues of digital sovereignty. It may also help them lay the ground for the establishment of a tech-oriented, globally open, and non-military focused Digital Transatlantic Organization. If so, the new Digital NATO will be able to promote a renewed sense of partnership, security, and prosperity across the Atlantic and globally in the digital age.

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The EU as a Global Player: The Search for Strategic Autonomy

JIM CLOOS

Introduction: New geopolitics

In a world where a more assertive China is rapidly rising, the United States is becoming less predictable, the UK is going its own path, neighbors like Russia and Turkey are difficult and at times hostile and Africa is struggling to find its way, the EU must raise its game and become a stronger global player. This changing context is increasingly recognized by the European Heads of State and Government. The EU's tone has, in fact, become more assertive and voluntarist, with the European Council more frequently holding strategic debates on important third country partners.

There are three pre-conditions for the EU to be a true global player:

See the world as it is

A global player must perceive itself as one and adopt a language and demeanor that reflect this stance. A global player, moreover, sees the world as it is, not as the one it would like it to be. The EU, rightly, prides itself on being a strong promoter of multilateralism and a defender of values. And it should certainly continue pressing these priorities. But if other players are choosing not to play that game, then the EU must adapt and give itself the means to defend its interests in a more hard-headed way. We simply do not live in the post-modern world Europeans have been dreaming about.

Determine its place on the global chess board

A strong global player clearly envisions its place on the global stage. There is a need for a new and more equal partnership with the US and a clear

understanding of how the EU fits into the triangle with the US and China. The definition of China as a strategic rival – which the US is not, and Canada even less so, of course, – a competitor and a partner was a step in the right direction. The EU must also devise a more stringent policy towards Russia and Turkey while keeping the door open for a more constructive dialogue. Concerning Russia, it should be careful not to drive Moscow into the arms of China, in a new atmosphere of a cold war opposing the West to the rest. There has been a lot of talk about reinventing its relationship with Africa; it is time to take bold measures in that direction. And last but not least the EU needs to resolve its future relations with the UK, which remains an important European country. In view of the recent behavior of the UK government, this will inevitably take some time.

Find the right balance between interests and values

The EU has rightly been proud of its values and its defense of democracy, freedom and the rule of law. But there are two important requirements if it wants to promote those values. The first is to implement them convincingly in Europe itself, which is not always the case. The second is to stop pretending that EU foreign policy is all about values; it is not and cannot be. There is always a need to find the right balance between interests and values. If you do not defend your interests, you will lose your values in the end because you will be at the mercy of others. So we need a strong EU if we want to have an impact on values. In this context, we need a fresh reflection on our sanctions policy. The latter should be seen as a tool rather than as the replacement for a policy.

We are talking here about the psychological underpinnings for being a global player. They are necessary but not sufficient. That is why in this short article we will mainly focus on the notion of strategic autonomy.

The concept of strategic autonomy

A new concept has entered the EU vocabulary, *strategic autonomy*. Maybe the best way to start is to look at why the debate on strategic autonomy arose in the first place. It arose for two reasons: we live in a global

environment that looks threatening, and we have faced a number of very serious crises over the past years that have revealed weaknesses in our system.

All of this has generated a feeling that Europe needs to become more resilient, more powerful, more capable to act, and, yes, more autonomous. This feeling has been encapsulated in the concept of strategic autonomy. At the root of it is a feeling that, to survive in an increasingly complicated and threatening world, the Union must have the capacity to act and set its priorities, make sovereign decisions and defend its interests and values. Seen from this angle, it is an idea that makes a lot of sense and corresponds to the evolving and more assertive language used by the European Council at least since 2016, as witnessed for instance by the Strategic Agenda adopted in June 2019. Maybe the simplest way to express what it means is the one given by Daniel Fiott from the European Union Institute for Security Studies: "the freedom to act and freedom from dependence."

As often happens in Europe, the same term elicits very different interpretations. It is therefore important to clearly state what strategic autonomy is *not* meant to be. It is not a call for autarky. We do not reason in terms of a Union cut off from the world and becoming totally self-reliant. Trying to do that would be totally unrealistic and crazy on the part of a Union that is so embedded and integrated into the global world order. Neither is it a sly way of bringing back protectionism via the back door. There are countries in the EU that are more liberal than others, and it is a constant debate. But no Member State calls into question the virtue of trade. That would be folly on the part of a Union that is by far the biggest trading power in the world. And finally, it is not an attack on NATO and the transatlantic alliance. That would be divisive, superfluous and dangerous. For the central and eastern Member States a weakening of NATO and of the transatlantic relationship would raise fears for their own security.

Lessons from the recent crises

The successive crises over the past 12 years have revealed vulnerabilities and weaknesses that, if unattended, could have led to the break-up of the EU. The crises have obliged the EU to become more

autonomous and more assertive and to be less dependent on outside actors. One may say that the EU has practiced strategic autonomy a bit like Molière's Mister Jourdain practiced prose, without realizing what he was doing.

The sub-prime crisis led to the strengthening of the economic pillar of the EMU and a much stronger role for the European Central Bank. The migration crisis led to a better control of the external borders, the strengthening of FRONTEX and the Asylum Agency, and a far more effective cooperation with countries of origin and transit. BREXIT pulled the EU27 together in quite an impressive show of unity and determination. The withdrawal of the Trump administration from the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris agreement on climate was strongly resisted by the Europeans who stuck to their guns in both instances and did not follow Washington. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU increased cooperation across the board, developed a joint approach concerning vaccines, and adopted a massive and innovative socioeconomic package.

The use of the term strategic autonomy is in fact a way to conceptualize what was happening, but also to go further in drawing all the lessons from the past years. The best way to allay fears about a possible misuse of the term is to focus on its practical sides and to use it as a tool to have a more systematic and informed look at what the EU must do in concrete terms to further enhance its resilience and its capacity to be a global player.

The time has come to define a more coherent framework and a pro-active policy towards strategic autonomy. This requires determined action by the State and public authorities. In the EU context, that means a key role for the European Council, but also a new reflection on governance and the wielding of executive power. How can we best and in the most flexible way mobilize both the EU's resources and the resources available at the level of the Member States and their regions? The quest for strategic autonomy would also benefit from more systematic foresight efforts. This is not about predicting what by nature is unpredictable (*black swans* do happen) but about looking at emerging tendencies and potential game-changers and increasing resilience and the capacity to withstand shocks and volatility and even to benefit from them.

Some key areas to look at

Strategic autonomy starts at home. It concerns all our policies. The crises we faced arose outside the EU but had a dramatic effect on the EU and in the EU. They challenged our unity. They revealed flaws and weaknesses in our system. They made us feel vulnerable. And they obliged us to improvise and find responses on the hoof.

It is now urgent to have a much more systematic and thorough look at our key policies. Any meaningful reflection on the concept has to go together with a thorough analysis of our strengths and weaknesses across major policy fields. Where are we strong and can take a lead?

Climate change

The EU has been for years a leading promoter of the fight against climate change. This gives it prestige and influence, as well as a first-mover advantage. The EU ratified and implemented the Kyoto Protocol even though the Americans were not on board. It stuck to the Paris Agreement even when Trump took the US out. Europe has a strong position here: 93% of Europeans see climate change as a serious problem; the EU will devote 30% of the MFF + RRF to the fight against climate change. Of course, it will have to do its own homework, including on the internal burden sharing. The recent *Fit-for-55* package proposed by the Commission, which will be hotly debated and require complicated negotiations, will be an important test in this respect. But the world will only be saved if all the big players do their part. EU emissions are after all only 9% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, the recent re-entry of the U.S into the Paris Agreement is great news. The growing awareness in China of the need to tackle climate change is also positive.

Internal market and industrial policy

The EU has a huge internal market and a sophisticated regulatory framework, accounting for the “Brussels effect” in terms of norms-setting

described by Anu Bradford. However, the much-vaunted single market has considerable gaps, particularly in the services field, including digital. Europe thus deprives itself of fully using its potential, and this often for rather parochial defensive reasons. And there is also maybe another reason: a certain lack of trust between Europeans. To put it bluntly: when Paris and Berlin talk about "European champions," in many quarters of the EU this is read as a call for French and German ones. Silicon Valley is powerful because it is very innovative but also because there is the huge US market behind it.

In terms of industrial policy, our potential remains high. It bears repeating that, with its 53 sites of production, the EU is the first global producer of Covid vaccines and that it has been by far the biggest exporter of vaccines to third countries. But there are also weaknesses. Europeans were shocked to discover that they almost completely depended on China and India for even basic medicines. A fresh look at key value chains and our real dependences is needed; this also applies to rare earth materials and microchips. It is welcome news that Europeans leaders at the highest level now openly talk about a European industrial policy, as an accompanying policy to a strong Single market. It is simply a fact, as again shown by the various crises, that leaving matters just to the markets is a recipe for disaster. There is no great power in the world that does not have an industrial policy of some shape or other.

Digital

In the digital field, Europeans are forerunners in regulation but are lagging behind in terms of exploiting their own data and they are outplayed by the GAFAMs (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft) and the emerging Chinese giants in IT, with negative effects on European technological sovereignty. Europe is good at digital regulation but not so good in the field of digital innovation and entrepreneurship.

This is a key point. Strategic autonomy cannot just be about defensive measures. Of course, it is important to adopt regulations setting limits to what the big IT companies can do on our markets. It is vital to fight cyber-attacks. But this is not enough. Europe needs at the same time innovation and investment in ground-breaking technologies. It cannot be that Europe has the

protection and the Chinese and Americans have the data and the use of them. It is sad to notice that there is not a single EU company among the twenty first major IT companies in the world. Norms and the rules of the game will eventually be set by those who invent and market the new technologies.

Health

There has not been a perfect strategy against the COVID-19 pandemic, not in the EU nor anywhere else in the world. Practically all countries in the world have struggled with this pandemic in some form or other. Rather than playing blame games, we should focus on cool-headedly analyzing what has happened and drawing the right conclusions for the future. The June 2021 European Council started doing exactly that. There are many questions arising. Would stocks of equipment and medicines have been useful? Probably "yes," but you have to look at it in terms of risk analysis and weighing against other urgent and vital investments needed. At a minimum, pooling resources would definitely make sense. The joint procurement initiative on vaccines has turned out to be a success. Today, the EU overall is extremely well-placed in terms of the percentage of the population that has been vaccinated. In this context, it is legitimate to ask whether there should be reflection on increasing EU competences some areas of the health sector so as to make things easier for the future. Maybe one should also look into the functioning and further strengthening of the European Drug Agency and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Those are obvious things springing to mind. And maybe a quick thought at the end: would this not be the right time to collectively think about how European States could better reward public service, improve working conditions of doctors and nurses and emergency services? This will surely remain a national competence but nothing prevents the European Council from providing some common guidance.

Trade

Concerning trade, there is some hope of a relaunch of the WTO, with the arrival of the Biden administration. That would be very much in the interest of the EU, which has and will remain a staunch defender of

multilateralism in this area. But there is a "but." It is not enough to preach multilateralism. One also has to be prepared to defend one's own interests when others do not play the game. The EU needs a strong toolkit of autonomous measures to defend itself against unfair practices or measures directed against it. There has been a lot of progress in this respect over the past years: the screening of foreign direct investments and the revival of the blocking statute that had been created at the time of the Helms-Burton US sanctions are positive developments. We also have to look at the value chains and see where we are over-dependent on only one or very few suppliers, or on not so reliable ones. This requires a closer examination, to be led by the Commission. What can be done to diversify sources? To encourage reinvestment within the EU? This is not protectionism, it is caring about our own security.

A last point under this heading concerns the international status of the euro and its use in global trade. This is an old debate which so far has not really led to a clear strategy. It is time to have another look at the issue.

Defense and security

It is widely recognized that Europeans should do more for their own defense, with a focus on the added value of the European Security and Defense Policy. This requires both clarification of relations with NATO and a more direct, equal and comprehensive dialogue with the U.S on security. This is not about replacing NATO in its hard security role. It is not about a European army or transforming the EU into a defense organization. It is about what to do to use EU means to improve the overall defense effort.

Some progress has been made in recent times. The EU has put into place a *Coordinated annual Review of Defense* (CARD), which helps getting a clear picture of the state of armed forces across Europe. It has set up a *Structured Reinforced Cooperation* (PESCO) to develop joint projects in the area of defense. A new *European Defense Fund* (EDF) will, for the first time, allow the use of the EU budget for military projects. And finally, the EU is preparing for adopting a new *Strategic Compass* under French Presidency next year: this should help to provide a vision of the EU's strategic interests and its contribution to overall defense efforts.

Concerning relations with NATO, Sven Biscop developed an interesting vision in a recent article called "EU and NATO Strategy: A Compass, a Concept, and a Concordat."[1] He considers that the new EU Compass and NATO's new Concept discussion should be used to find a better practical division of labor and responsibility between the two organizations ("concordat"), with NATO having a clear lead in territorial defense and resilience, while the EU should be leading in building resilience against non-military threats and in targeted expeditionary operations. EU Partners and allies should plan for one single Force Package. And NATO and EU could better interlock their planning processes.

Governance

Strategic autonomy is not only about means, it is also about governance. We will look at this from three angles.

Strong European Council leadership

Working out a concerted strategy for more strategic autonomy requires top-down guidance and coordination by the European Council. We have seen how vital the implication of this body has been to master the string of crises befalling the EU since 2008. Created in 1974 outside of the Treaties, the EUCO has, over the years, become the determining actor in shaping the EU. Its role has been strengthened bit by bit and it has become decisive in strategic terms. The Lisbon treaty has consolidated its eminent place within the EU institutional framework and transformed it into a fully-fledged EU institution. While it confirmed most of its characteristics as they had evolved over time, it also introduced some important changes. The EUCO outcome is no longer just Presidency conclusions but conclusions of the EUCO as such. The EUCO now has a permanent or rather fulltime chair, who is elected for a period of two and a half year, once renewable. On the international scene, "at his level and in his capacity as PEC," he represents it as regards the area of Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Lisbon Treaty also

[1] Sven Biscop, "EU and NATO Strategy: A Compass, a Concept, and a Concordat," *Egmont* 141, March 16, 2021, https://www.egmontinstitute.be/eu-and-nato-strategy-a-compass-a-concept-and-a-concordat/.

changed the format of the EUCO, which is now composed only of the President, the President of the Commission and the 27 Heads of State or government. This has greatly enhanced interactivity within the forum. The EUCO thus provides the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and defines the general political directions and priorities. But this only works if the other institutions play their part according to their respective competences. At the same time, there is a need for using not only EU resources but also national means and resources in the pursuit of strategic autonomy.

European democracy

Globalization, the advent of social media and recurrent crises present growing challenges to representative democracy, both at national and EU levels. This has a direct impact on the way policies are developed and evolve, as we have seen in the reactions to the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. The *Conference on the Future of Europe* that was recently launched could provide an opportunity for a fresh look at European democracy. There are many questions worth looking at. Is there room for a coexistence of parliamentary and participatory democracy within the EU? How could this impact the EU governing system? How can regional, national and EU levels interact best? Can we develop a clearer doctrine on democracy in Europe and democracy of Europe? How can we ensure both efficiency and legitimacy?

The very concept of strategic autonomy that, as we have seen, can be controversial should be taken up in those reflections and be further developed. It does raise issues related to the link between Brussels and the Member States as well as issues of competences and means.

Lessons from the European Recovery strategy

The Recovery package adopted at the end of last year and that has now started being implemented was a major step in the fight against the consequences of COVID-19 and beyond. For various reasons:

- Its sheer size: it amounts to EUR 1.07 billion under the MFF (for the years 2021-7) and EUR 750 billion under NGEU (for the years 2021-

2023). If you add to this the EUR 540 billion for the three safety nets out into place for workers, sovereigns and companies), we arrive at the staggering figure of EUR 2.36 trillion.

- Its innovative architecture: the Commission, on behalf of the EU, borrowing 750 billion on the financial markets, which money is then for loans to the Member States (360 billion) and, in a novel way, for grants (390 billion). With this move, the EU has become a major player on the bond markets.
- The repayment requirements: the money borrowed by the EU will have to be repaid, and the EU budget is the ultimate guarantee for doing so. There are only three ways to ensure the necessary funds to repay the grants part: an increase in the contributions of the Member States, a reduction in EU expenditure, or the creation of new EU own resources. There are good reasons to believe that the last option will turn out to be the most palatable one. This could be a game-changer.
- The strong emphasis on climate change: at least 30% of the funds both under MMF and Recovery will be spent for the purpose of fighting climate change. This will allow the EU to retain its leading role in the protection of our environment and to use the climate challenge as a lever for a strong and competitive economy.

To be sure, the specific recovery part of the package is meant as a one-off instrument, linked to the Covid-19 crisis. But may well turn out to become a precedent, showing what the Union can do in an extreme situation; this in itself will serve a reassurance for the future. It is reasonable to assume that the effects of the measures taken in the context of the COVID-19 crisis will be long-lasting.

Conclusion

The geopolitical changes that occur at a rapid pace and the repetition of major crises pose a serious challenge to the EU. They have obliged it adopt a string of measures over the past years to enhance its resilience and capacity to react. The time has come to move from haphazard reactions to a carefully thought-out policy of increased strategic autonomy. This implies a fresh look at the world as it evolves and a clear view on the EU's position on the global

chessboard. It also entails a hard-headed analysis of Europe's strengths and weaknesses across the various policies and areas. And finally, it calls for a new reflection on the EU's governance. Developing such a strategy will transform the challenge into an opportunity: the opportunity to make the EU stronger, more relevant, more resilient and more dynamic.

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Global Conflict and Multilateralism

HEINZ GÄRTNER

Introduction

Just like in the second half of the 19th century, the world today is witnessing a breakdown of multilateralism, the emergence of nationalist and ethnic xenophobia, the demonization of adversaries, the decline of international institutions, withdrawals from international agreements and treaties, and an expanding arms race.

In order to understand how global political conflicts and social peace will look after the coronavirus era, it is necessary to analyze how they are developing during the crisis itself. This article makes the argument that the existing tendencies will accelerate and endure after the crisis. The following four factors will be discussed here: the competition between the US and China, which has been accelerated by the election campaign in the US and the mutual blame game over the origin of the coronavirus; the changing priorities and threat perception of NATO in the wake of the virus; the newly discovered importance of the state, especially the welfare state; and Europe's response.

President Trump's presidency was not only unsuccessful but left the world in disarray. He abandoned multilateralism and polarized the international system. Just like in the second half of the 19th century, the world today is witnessing a breakdown of a rules-based order. Under the Trump administration it became visible that the US ceased to be the leading world power. This relative decline of the US implies that Europe will have to engage in world affairs. President Joseph Biden will certainly cooperate within some multilateral organizations. He will act more diplomatically. Tensions with China and Russia will remain, however. The emerging bipolarity will be structural. The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 can be a model for global cooperation. The world now has the choice: 1914 or 1975.

The US-China competition

The US election campaign gave us a glimpse of what might come after the elections and the Covid crisis. US President Donald Trump chose two issues to campaign on: China and immigration. These issues are not new and have generated an international conflict with China as well as domestic discrimination during the four years of his presidency. The campaign and the Covid crisis accelerated both trends, and they will remain in the "time after." Trump announced a halt on immigration amid the coronavirus pandemic and, after protests, specified that it would be temporary. At the same time, anti-Asian racism increased during the spread of the virus in the US and elsewhere.

Trump chose China and immigration as his main campaign topics to divert attention away from his own incompetence in failing to react in time and downplaying the danger of the virus. Once the danger became obvious, he blamed his predecessor Barack Obama, the Democrats, immigrants, and China. In other foreign policy areas, the president could not claim success: the "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran did not bring Iran to its knees, the charm offensive towards North Korean leader Kim Jong Un did not lead to nuclear disarmament, his Middle East "deal of the century" is doomed to fail because it was rejected by major stakeholders in the region and around the world, and the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) can hardly be sold as a "colossal victory" by the former president.

Trump also started to speak of a "war against the virus" to appear as a military commander. By all definitions of war, the pandemic is not a war. According to Clausewitz, war is "an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfill our will." In addition, there must be a centralized command structure for all warfighting parties. If it were a war, against which "the utmost use of force is necessary" (Clausewitz), the US, with by far the largest military in the world, would not have a problem to defeat the virus.

The indirect reaction of the world was an increasing feeling that the US could not serve as a global leader in times of crisis. In the past, Europe looked to the US after it decisively entered both world wars and provided the Marshall Plan aid after 1947. The US was also considered to be the

protective power against the Communist Bloc. Europeans tried to look away from the atrocities of the Vietnam War in the sixties and seventies, but it was harder to do so during the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which was conducted under false pretenses.

In spite of China's harsh reaction to suppress the spread of the virus, China's perception will not go unscathed because of its initial hesitant response and the number of dead and infected. The economies of both the US and China will bear a significant toll. It is unlikely that either will emerge from the crisis as the undisputed leading superpower.

Most countries in the world do not want to be entrapped in a future great power conflict. They must also learn to manage international crises themselves – not without the US, but also not by waiting for the US to do so. Since Europe is not in the position to take on this role either, we can expect a more dangerous and polarized world.

NATO's changing threat perception

The US military is reducing its military exercises in Europe because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Is Russia becoming less of a threat to the US and NATO than the pandemic? A large part of NATO's exercises are designed to improve NATO's internal cohesiveness and coordination. They are not directly related to external threats. Therefore, they have a strong autistic dimension and would continue even if external enemies disappeared and NATO did not know about it. The same is true for NATO's defense expenditures. Russia's military expenditures are only eight percent of those of NATO. If Germany spent two percent of its GDP on defense, as the US and NATO request, it would exceed Russia's defense expenditures. There is no direct proportionality between defense spending and threat analysis. This pattern will also endure in the post-corona era. The expenditures tell more about NATO's internal burden-sharing than about external threats. Fighting Covid-19 will enhance NATO's capabilities to deal with different challenges. Pandemics have played a minor role or have been ignored in the doctrines and strategies of NATO and its member states as a challenge altogether – or at least thus far.

The perception of Russia by NATO and the US will probably not change after the pandemic weakens or ends. Mainstream media in the West, which functions as a seismograph, already accuses Russia of using the virus to spread disinformation and downplay Russia's aid to Italy. To use a historic analogy, the last worldwide pandemic in 1918-1919 did not improve great power relations. It is possible, however, that a different positive narrative about Russia's help could prevail, as the EU, including the European Central Bank, failed to provide adequate aid not only to Italy and Spain but also to Africa. China and Russia stepped in and filled this void to some extent. The US was very successful, for example, in building a very positive image through the Marshall Plan after World War II.

Security relations between NATO and Russia will not change much, as the security establishments on both sides might not want it. They are eager to preserve their own kingdoms. However, we can expect a thaw on other levels, i.e., science, research, technology, academia, and think tanks, but also in companies doing common research. In these areas, co-operation will be indispensable, as the fight against the global pandemic demonstrates. That is of significant importance, and over time it could also enhance political and security relations between the West (including NATO members) and Russia.

The state is back

Over the last two to three decades, the idea of the state has been challenged in the wake of the debate over globalization. The argument was that the state was too weak and too small to deal with global issues and simultaneously too big for local problems. In addition, the emerging trends of nationalism and populism were attributed to the state. For many observers, the so-called nation-state is responsible for these developments. They conclude that the nation-state is the main obstacle for globalization as it promotes nationalism.

The state and the nation are very different species, with distinct origins and histories. Ethnically and historically homogeneous nation-states are a political construct designed to give the idea of the nation more power and secure its survival. Because the state is an administrative unit with the legitimate use of force (M. Weber), a weaker state would strengthen the next

strongest actor: a powerful political and ethnic nation. The privatization of force would be the consequence, what Hedley Bull called "neo-medievalism."

The coronavirus crisis of 2020 has confirmed once again how important the state is to secure the survival of the society and economy. Thus, different entities and persons, such as companies and artists, are calling for support from the state. Most countries have to rely on their public health systems to treat patients infected with Covid-19. In many countries, the states pay for part-time work in order to avoid unbearable unemployment rates. Artists who usually work as freelancers get support and small projects from the state. The "welfare state" all of a sudden appears to be indispensable.

All this has nothing to do with the image of a homogeneous nation. A decay of the state would lead to the loss of many of these functions. A solution to nationalism lies not in the abolition of the state but in the separation of the state from the nation. To address the problems of the nation-state, the state has to be de-nationalized and de-ethnicized. The nation, culture, and ethnicity should become private matters. Social issues are to a large extent the responsibility of the state – social relations not so much. The administrative tasks of the state should not be weakened by criticism of the artificial nation-state.

A state's activities and actions can also have a decisive impact on politics and the economy. Leaders of states that contained outbreaks rapidly and took decisive measures, such as South Korean President Moon Jae-in and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, won more support and trust from their populations than leaders who used war rhetoric, such as French President Emmanuel Macron and US President Donald Trump.[1]

History can provide some insights into the impact of a state's actions. State interventions, such as social distancing, can have positive effects on the economy by limiting spikes in infections and avoiding mass casualties. A study of the economic impact of the 1918 Spanish flu in the US found that cities that implemented early and extensive non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) suffered no adverse economic effects over the medium term. In fact,

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1 https://s2.washingtonpost.com/camp-rw/?trackId=596b53a3ade4e24119b19b36&s=5ebcc12 5fe1ff654c 2dc9f66&linknum=7&linktot=73.

cities that intervened earlier and more aggressively experienced a relative increase in real economic activity after the pandemic subsided.[2]

Europe's deficiencies

The political engagement of the EU is a requirement for many conflict areas. This fact is recognized by the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) of 2016: "In a more contested world, the EU will be guided by a strong sense of responsibility. We will engage responsibly across Europe and the surrounding regions to the east and south. We will act globally to address the root causes of conflict and poverty, and to promote human rights. […] The Union cannot pull up a drawbridge to ward off external threats. Retreat from the world only deprives us of the opportunities that a connected world presents."[3] Nevertheless, the EU has not been very successful in engaging in international conflicts. It could not develop policies on China, the Middle East, or East Asia independent of the US. It is mostly reactive to the US concerning trade issues with China, Korea, and Iran.

When it comes to pandemics, the EUGS seems to have been prescient. It states that "we will therefore redouble our efforts on prevention, monitoring root causes such as human rights violations, inequality, resource stress, and climate change – which is a threat multiplier that catalyzes water and food scarcity, pandemics and displacement. […] On health, we will work for more effective prevention, detection and responses to global pandemics."[4] However, preparations to prevent and monitor pandemics were largely disregarded. The result was that, after the outbreak of Covid-19 and its spread to Europe, desperate member states had to react mostly by themselves.

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[2] Sergio Correia, Stephan Luck and Emil Verner, "Pandemics Depress the Economy, Public Health Interventions Do Not: Evidence from the 1918 Flu," June 2020, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Papers.cfm?abstract_id=3561560 and https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/pandemic-economy-lessons-1918-flu/.

[3] European Union, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy," 2016, 8, https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3eaae2cf-9ac5-11e6-868c-01aa75ed71a1.

[4] European Union, "Shared Vision," 29-43.

Despite the fact that the EU is considered to be a peace project, there was an unfortunate idea by some experts that the EU would require crises to promote and strengthen its integration. Once again, the coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated that the opposite is true. But this was already true for previous crises that the EU faced: the financial crisis of 2008-9, the 2014 Ukraine crisis, the 2015 refugee crisis, and Brexit. However, no matter the causes, there are no tensions between EU member states that might lead to military conflict, and the EU has avoided collapse.

Health is indivisible

The post-corona world will likely be less globalized, less integrated, less wealthy, and more polarized. A European response to these developments might be to revive some of its ideas and past principles. The document that best expresses European values is the Co-operation on Security and Co-operation (CSCE) or the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Notably, it did not label enemies or even opponents or adversaries, while many contemporary security and defense strategies define other states as "opponents," "adversaries," or "enemies." The Helsinki Final Act requested cooperative security and considered security to be indivisible. It developed a Decalogue of humanitarian values and supported economic cooperation. It allowed the changing of borders only peacefully and by agreement.

The Helsinki Final Act and the subsequent process could provide a guideline for resolving current conflicts without replicating them. The CSCE process was based on three "baskets": bilateral and multilateral co-operation relating to security; economics, science, technology, and the environment; and humanitarian and other fields (today the OSCE's three dimensions: the politico-military, economic and environmental, and the human dimension). The Final Act recognized the indivisibility of security in Europe as well as a common interest in the development of cooperation throughout Europe. CSCE participating states pledged to refrain from any form of armed intervention or threat of such intervention or any other act of military, political, economic, or other coercion against another participating state. Accordingly, they would refrain from direct or indirect assistance for terrorist activities. The participating states reaffirmed their willingness to

intensify such cooperation, irrespective of their systems. At the same time, the Helsinki Final Act was the midwife of the civil society movements in Eastern Europe.

Cooperation, not hegemony, is the answer to new global and regional challenges

The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated just how timely this document is. The pandemic vividly has shown that not only is security indivisible in Europe, but so too is health indivisible across the world. Health is a global common good. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the fields of economics, science, technology, the environment, and humanitarian affairs are indispensable. The categories "opponents," "adversaries," and "enemies" cannot be applied to the virus. It is the enemy of all and does not distinguish between small and big states, nations, ethnicities, cultures, or religions.

It is not only necessary to find a vaccine and a cure but also to find out what conditions are favorable in the transmission of viruses and bacteria from nature to human beings; not only virology plays a role here but also climate change and social behavior can create an environment conducive to new diseases. Blaming China will not solve these global challenges, but instead cooperation in humanitarian, environmental, health, and economic issues will.

Hegemonic struggles should not have a place in the post-corona world, although the same states will seek to maintain their positions. This is true on both the global as well as the regional level. Trump and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, for example, seized on the dire economic situation of Iran to increase the "maximum pressure" policy to reduce Iran's influence and geopolitical potential in the Persian Gulf region. To avoid further escalation, the US and regional powers could pledge to renounce hegemonic aspirations in the region. While this may sound too sweeping, there is a historical analogy: a common declaration (the "Shanghai Declaration") between US President Richard Nixon and Chinese leader Mao Zedong in 1972 that neither they nor any other power should "seek hegemony in the

Asia-Pacific region," which served as the basis for the most successful summit meeting during the Cold War. China's support for insurgents in Asia decreased after the meeting. There is another parallel too. In the early seventies, the US looked for ways to reduce its presence in Asia and end the war in Vietnam. Trump announced several times that he wanted to decrease the US presence abroad. Such a declaration would have given him a justification for a further reduction in US troops in the Middle East. This would give Iran the opportunity to decrease its own foreign expenditures and open up resources to fight the pandemic. Regional talks could take place within the framework of the "Regional Dialogue Forum" and the new security networks suggested by Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. European states could make efforts to promote such dialogue, encompassing not only security but also science, health, technology, and the environment.

Europe as a facilitator

The US will not remain the world leader alone, but it will remain engaged in global and regional developments. While Europe is not a major political actor in a purely geopolitical perspective, the Helsinki Final Act could serve as a guideline that is instructive for the corona and post-corona world. It does not identify enemies, nor even opponents or adversaries. Instead, cooperative measures should not only include issues of security but also health, technology, and the environment. These are all indivisible. Europe should take its lead from these principles to help prevent a slow-motion breakdown of the values that it holds dear, including effective multilateralism, functioning international institutions, interdependence and interconnectedness, military restraint and support for peace, engaging adversaries in dialogue, and common and cooperative efforts in science, technology, the environment, and health. This does not exclude competition for the best and most successful ideas, which should and will be shared eventually for future progress. European states could, for example, facilitate to set up both a regional and global early waring and monitoring system for pandemics and diseases comparable to the monitoring system of the

Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Organization (CTBTO). Part of the system should be a global communications and data collection center that can quickly provide information to all member states. Political engagement, rather than higher defense spending, offers a solution for Europe to increase its global leverage. The other scenario would be the world after the Spanish flu and World War I, when 50 to 100 million lives were lost, great power conflict resumed, and Germany tried to achieve hegemonic dominance in Europe and the world.

Multipolarity without multilateralism

New actors are emerging in the World after the Cold War bipolarity and the US unipolarity. The world is becoming more multipolar. More competing poles may lead to more polarization and a (nuclear) arms race unless it is be accompanied by a strong multilateralism. However, multilateralism is in decline. Europe and Asia have to find their roles in this new world. The US-debate tends to ignore Europe's importance in the world while China's threat is often exaggerated. Asia itself is heterogeneous and consists of multiple political, economic and cultural centers. China is the most powerful state but Asia is not China-led. Multipolarity with no or little multilateralism is a dangerous mix for the world. Europe's history offers some analogies for possible scenarios for the future.

Just like in the second half of the 19th century, the world today is witnessing a breakdown of multilateralism, the emergence of nationalistic and ethnic xenophobia, the demonization of adversaries, the depreciation of international institutions, withdrawals from international agreements and treaties, and an expanding arms race. It is a breakdown of values that Europe holds dear in slow motion: effective multilateralism, working international institutions, interdependence and interconnectedness, military restraint but peace support, engagement of adversaries, common and cooperative security. Simultaneously the world moves to a Great Power Conflict. The conflict between the US and China is not new but US President Donald Trump increased tensions with China.

President Trump's presidency was not only unsuccessful but left the world in disarray.[5] He abandoned multilateralism and polarized the international system. President Trump left most of the international agreements, like the nuclear deal with Iran (JCPOA) and the Treaty on Intermediate Missiles (INF), and he attacked multilateral Institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Paris Climate agreement. The great power competition with China and Russia became a priority and he imposed heavy sanctions on Iran. He threatened European companies with secondary sanctions if they did business with Iran although the Europeans considered the JCPOA a masterpiece of "effective multilateralism." All the sanctions did not change Iran's behavior according to his request. Neither "maximum pressure" nor friendly relations between Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un led to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. But already before Trump, America had resisted international consensus on land mines, cluster bombs, the rights of women, and more, failing to ratify treaties, even when it signed them.[6]

The Europeans feel betrayed. Over decades they have built up a very positive image of the US. The US intervened in both World Wars, was the leading Western power against the Soviet bloc and provided the Marshall Plan for some European states. They remained mostly silent in the face of the brutality of the Vietnam War. This was not possible anymore when George W. Bush intervened in Iraq 2003 under false pretenses. As former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld observed, there was a division between "old and new Europe." Under the Trump administration, again, most parts of Europe felt that the US ceased to be the beloved leading world power.

In addition, internal weaknesses of the US have become visible. Bad management of the Covid-19 crisis, a dysfunctional health system, a crumbling infrastructure and cities, social inequality and underfunded high schools. In the freedom of press index the US ranks 45th![7] Joseph Nye's

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[5] Richard Haass, *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017).

[6] Peter Beinart "Biden Wants America to Lead the World. It Shouldn't," *The New York Times*, December 2, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/02/opinion/biden-foreign-policy.html.

[7] 2020 World Press Freedom Index, https://rsf.org/en/ranking.

American “soft power”[8] was losing attractiveness. “Soft power” was selectively focused on elite America, elite universities, high tech companies, famous popular culture, anyway.

Great power conflict

Every ten years there is a debate in the US whether the country is in decline. Joseph Nye[9] argued that it was a normal offset by Germany and Japan, whose economies had been destroyed during the Second World War, but later gained a larger share in the world economy. During the Trump administration it became visible, however, that decline goes beyond the economic dimension and comprises political, social and cultural dimensions. To be clear, the US will not lose its great power status but it will cease to be the exceptional or indispensable superpower and become a normal state.

This relative decline of the US implies that Europe will have to engage more in world affairs. The debate so far has been focused on enhancing European military capabilities. More important is Europe’s political role. The Trump administration proposed the Kushner Plan in the Middle East, which abandoned the two-state solution. In the Korean Peninsula, Europeans first watched the Kim-Trump war of words and then their love affair. US-Russia relations were dominated by US internal affairs, which had an impact on European-Russian relations. Also, Europe should develop its own China policy independent from the US-China great power conflict. Europe was not able to keep the JCPOA functional because it was afraid of Trump’s secondary sanctions. Europe should seize the opportunity to use the bigger room of maneuver the Biden administration would open up. Higher defense spending is not the solution for Europe to get a bigger leverage in the world but political engagement. The EU has not been very successful in getting engaged in international conflicts, however. Also, a European army would not be able to address these issues. It is becoming an excuse for European political deficiencies. Europeans must learn to manage

[8] Among others: Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

[9] Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

international crises themselves – not without the US, but also not waiting for the US to do so. If Europe is not in the position to take on this role either, we can expect a more dangerous and polarized world.

Historian Graham Allison[10] found that in 75 percent of great power conflicts, when a declining power was challenged by a rising power, war occurred. He calls this the Thucydides trap. Most countries in the world do not want to be entrapped in a future great power conflict. What will be Europe's options? In such a military conflict Europe will not side with China but will be drawn into a great power conflict, which is not in its interest, but to side with the US would be disastrous as well. A rational choice would be to stay neutral. Some NATO members, however, will observe the security commitments (Article V) of the Washington Treaty. If the EU stays neutral, NATO will likely become divided. Austria will be obliged to remain neutral according to its neutrality law.

Fareed Zakaria[11] argues that the existence of two great powers does not necessarily lead to war: "You can have bipolarity without war." He is referring to the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War. Counter examples would be the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta or the Carthaginian War between Rome and Carthage.

Will President Joseph Biden change course? Biden will not bring the US back to its exceptional status. Many changes are structural. Trump was not only an aberration. Richard Haass speaks of a "disruptive superpower,"[12] Michael Beckley of the "illiberal superpower."[13]

Biden will certainly cooperate within some multilateral organizations like the WHO, the WTO and return to the Paris Climate Agreement. He will act more diplomatically. There will be no new international treaties,

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[10] Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?* (New York: Mariner Books, 2017).

[11] Fareed Zakaria, *Ten Lessons for a Post-Pandemic World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020).

[12] Richard Haass, "Present at the Disruption: How Trump Unmade U.S. Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-08-11/present-disruption.

[13] Michael Beckley, "Rogue Superpower: Why This Could Be an Illiberal American Century," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-10-06/illiberal-american-century-rogue-superpower.

however, because they would require two thirds of the votes in the Senate. Republican Senators will not support a treaty that has been negotiated by a Democratic president. Presidential directives would still be possible instruments; they can be abandoned by the next president, however.

Joseph Biden will be more committed to NATO and work with US allies in Europe and Asia. He also announced the creation of an "alliance of democracies." Leaving aside the definition of democracy (what about US allies Saudi Arabia or Egypt?), this alliance or association would exclude powers like China and Russia. This concept per definition undermines multilateralism which is comprehensive and not exclusive. Tensions with China and Russia will remain. The polarity too, is structural. Biden could, however, take a big step like US President Nixon took when he visited Mao's China 1972. That was one of the most successful summits in post-Second World War history.

The multilateral nuclear deal with Iran (JCPOA)

As presidential candidate, Joseph Biden said that he would return to the JCPOA if Iran also abided by the agreement. It is still not clear whether he would attach further conditions since the Congress will put pressure on him to take a tough position towards Iran. Iran, for its part, said it will not accept for the JCPOA to be renegotiated. Nevertheless, Iran's former President Hassan Rouhani expressed the expectation that the newly elected US President would correct the failures of the previous administration and return to international law and treaties. Probably, Joseph Biden will address the missile issue. Referring to the experience of the war with Iraq, Iran argues it needs missiles for its defense. Therefore, Iran's missile program cannot be singled out. Saudi Arabia's missiles already have a longer range than those of Iran. In the framework of Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif proposal of regional dialogue, Iran could agree to regional arms control negotiations if all actors of the region were involved, however. A multilateral regional dialogue would leave the JCPOA untouched.

President Trump wanted to prevent the next president from restoring normal relations with Iran. He made Iran responsible for all the tensions in the region. The killing of General Soleimani and the alliance of

Arab states with Israel should isolate Iran politically and diplomatically. If President Biden thinks within a larger context, he could ignore Trump's policies and offer new diplomatic relations with Iran in order to save the nuclear deal. Such an initiative would go beyond Obama's rapprochement with Iran. In order not to be isolated, Iran itself could request that all the regional powers cooperate on the basis of the 2002 Arab Peace Plan that would recognize Israel but only within the borders of 1967. This would not alienate the Palestinians and would keep the door open for a two-state solution, which Joseph Biden supports. Trump's peace plan for the Middle East confirmed Israel's occupation of the West Bank and ignored the rights of the Palestinians.

In sum, on the one hand Biden's foreign policy will be more diplomatic and multilateral. He could establish some diplomatic relations with Iran. On the other hand, great power competition will remain and maybe even tensions will increase. Iran itself could offer multilateral regional arms control talks and confidence building. It could also get back to a regional dialogue with the Arab states if they returned to the Arab Peace Plan of 2002 that allows diplomatic relations with an Israel within the 1967 borders.

1914 or 1975?

A historical analogy could be the CSCE-Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Even developments during the East-West conflict have been influenced by the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. For example, the principle of mutual recognition of systems stood the test of heightened tensions during the Cold War: In spite of US President Ronald Reagan's harsh rhetoric and references to the Soviet Union as the "evil empire," he and his successor George H. W. Bush conscientiously respected the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, acknowledged parity between the superpowers and different systems during their various historic summits in the eighties.

China is not only a geopolitical power but engages in various institutional, political, economic and financial multilateral levels. It goes without saying that it tries to influence and shape the process according to its own political and economic interests – but so do other countries.

Abandoning multilateralism means abandoning common values. Values can change environments.

It is the Helsinki document which best expresses European values. It does not identify enemies or threats, not even opponents or adversaries. It requests cooperative security and analyses that security is indivisible. The Final Act is not only a guideline to reduce tensions all over Europe but can be a model for other conflict areas in the world, for example the relations between the two Koreas. The EU itself has to be realigned to the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. The world now has the choice: 1914 or 1975.

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The USA's Return to the Heart of Africa. Strategies, Conflicts and Counterfeit Terrorism in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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SERGIU MIȘCOIU

Introduction: the shift of the USA-DRC relations in the new Congolese context

Unlike the way things happen in most regions of the world where they either openly impose their views or influence the local and national political developments in a decisive manner, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the United States of America have been less successful in prevailing during the last two decades. This is mainly because the USA were traditionally close to the Mobutu regime (that was overturned in 1997), a regime supported by Washington throughout the entire Cold War period and even after the fall of the USSR.[1] Installed in the 1960s, with the active contribution of the US that wanted at the same time to defy the USSR and to challenge the former colonial powers of the region (Belgium and France), the Mobutu regime continued to benefit from US support in spite of its totalitarian repressive actions and partial rapprochement to Mao's China and to other Communist dictatorships. After Mobutu was overturned in 1997, his successors (Laurent-Désiré Kabila before 2001 and then Joseph Kabila, between 2001 and 2018) were naturally much less favorable to the US, a country which made efforts to prevent the victory of the anti-Mobutu forces.[2] Hence, for about two decades (1998-2018),

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1 Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire* (New York: American University Press, 1993).

2 Chris Cook, "American Policymaking in the Democratic Republic of the Congo 1996-1999: The Anti-Kabila Bias and the Crushing Neutrality of the Lusaka Accords," *African and Asian Studies* 9, no. 4 (2010): 393-417.

the DRC was more than prudent in opening the doors to a super-power who was close to the former regime's leader.

Moreover, given the progressive development of Sino-Congolese relations during these last twenty years, the USA felt to some extent "replaced" by China in its increasingly unconvincing role as protector of the DRC. In fact, being confronted with the domestic contestation of a divided but quasi-rebellious opposition that was opportunistically backed by the DRC's "concerned" neighbors, Joseph Kabila had no alternative but to progressively and then almost exclusively rely on the multi-layered support China was more than happy to offer in exchange for being granted an extensive control over the main natural resources, staring with the now-indispensable cobalt.[3] More than a classical rapprochement, the DRC's dependence on China increased to such an extent that various sectors of the economy and many levels of the decision-making system became informally subordinated to the Beijing-driven networks of influence.[4] Under these circumstances, the leverage of the United States was limited, while China did not hesitate to stress the success of its "win-win" successful strategy[5] in comparison with the US's weakening capacity of influence in the DRC before 2019.

Nevertheless, the odds changed with the election of Félix Tshisekedi in December 2018 and especially with the political switch he operated in December 2020. In the presidential elections of 2018, the incumbent President Joseph Kabila, who was no longer allowed to run, initially supported his party's candidate, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary (Common Front for Congo – FCC), before realizing that the latter's chances were low and that the best strategy would be to support the less radical opposition candidate, Tshisekedi (backed by a coalition between the Union for Democracy and Social Progress/UDPS and Vital Kamehre's Union of the Congolese

[3] Makhura Benjamin Rapanyane, "China's Involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Resource Curse Mineral Driven Conflict: An Afrocentric Review," *Contemporary Social Science* (May 2021), https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2021.1919749.

[4] Devon Curtis, "China and the Insecurity of Development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," *International Peacekeeping* 20, no. 5 (2013): 551-69.

[5] Andreea Bianca Urs, "Überlegungen und Perspektiven zur neuen chinesischen Ordnung in der Demokratischen Republik Kongo" [Reflections and Perspectives on the New Chinese Order in the Democratic Republic of Congo], in *Studia Europaea* 66, no. 1 (2021): 62.

Nation/UNC). Paying the debt of being elected with a small margin only due to Kabila's support, Tshisekedi made a governmental alliance with the former President's party but started to differentiate himself from his predecessor's political orientation and agenda. As a symbolic gesture, the new President visited the US in April 2019 and showed his interest in setting the relation between the two countries on a new basis, while informally suggesting to Mike Pompeo that China's quasi-exclusivity in some key sectors of the Congolese economy would be revisited. Encouraged by the positive feed-back coming from the USA, Tshisekedi continued to progressively emancipate himself from Kabila's influence and entourage and succeeded in reconfiguring the political spectrum to the benefit of his own party. The lethal coup took place in December 2020, when Tshisekedi announced the end of the incumbent coalition and proclaimed the "Sacred Union" of the nation, which meant, in fact, that Kabila's supporters (and most notably the MPs and the governors) had the "patriotic duty" to join the new presidential majority, isolating in this way his former ally.[6] This move was accompanied by a now-clear reorientation of the foreign policy discourse: the DRC was heading towards an advanced partnership with the European Union and the United States of America, while the officials appointed by Kabila and who were notoriously dependent of the Chinese-led networks of economic influence were removed from office during the first half of 2021.

In terms of foreign policy and attracting foreign aid, Felix Tshisekedi, Chairperson of the African Union for the year 2021, certainly has a major lead over his predecessor, who did not have such a definite position in this direction. Noticed by the international community, the actions of the new president have consequences on several levels: economic, political and security. For instance, the DRC reappeared on the list of eligible candidate countries for the Millennium Pact for the fiscal year 2021 in September 2020. This document is prepared by the Millennium Challenge Corporation

[6] Andreea Bianca Urs, Sergiu Mișcoiu, "De la continuité à la rupture. Une analyse discursive de la présidence de Felix Tshisekedi (RDC)" [From Continuity to Rupture. A Discourse Analysis of Felix Tshisekedi's Presidency (DRC)], in *Communication de crise et politiques conflictuelles en Afrique francophone* [Crisis Communication and Conflict Politics in Francophone Africa], eds. Sergiu Mișcoiu and Delia Pop-Flanja (forthcoming).

(MCC), a US development aid agency, which funds several African governments through multi-year grants amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars, after assessing progress made in terms of governance, transparency, effective public action and efforts to "catalyze" the private sector. Washington in particular welcomed several "significant progress during the reference period."[7] Currently, the right hand of Felix Tshisekedi, his former chief of staff, lies in prison for "embezzling public funds."[8] According to several voices, this trial would be an operation decided by President Tshisekedi under pressure from the White House, also through the active involvement of the US Ambassador Mike Hammer, being mainly about the disappearance of American money. Nevertheless, if we look at the case of Dan Gertler, an emblematic figure of the business environment, we understand that it is rather the game of influence and control of natural resources that takes place between different great powers and not a pressing need to regulate the market. The US sanctions on Israeli billionaire Dan Gertler, the one who has benefited from many mining contracts through the Kabila regime and is now in good contact with Tshisekedi, were successively introduced, removed, and reintroduced.[9]

The new Congolese context seems to be much more favorable to the promotion of the US's interests in DRC then the one prior to 2019. While the American Embassy deployed intensive efforts to ensure the participation of American holdings to the new series of contracts, as promised by the new Congolese government, one of the key issues was and still is the pacification of the Eastern provinces (and especially of North-Kivu and Ituri), affected by

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[7] Joël Té-Léssia Assoko, "Aide internationale : les États-Unis reclassifient la RDC" [International Aid: The US Reclassify the DRC], *Jeune Afrique* September 15, 2021, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1204588/economie/fmi-rdc-feu-vert-pour-un-financement-de-15-milliard-de-dollars/.

[8] Vincent Georis, "L'ombre de la Maison-Blanche pèse sur le procès Kamerhe en RDC" [The Shadow of the White House Weighs on the Kamerhe Process in the DRC], in *L'Echo*, June 3, 2021, https://www.lecho.be/economie-politique/international/afrique/l-ombre-de-la-maison-blanche-pese-sur-le-proces-kamerhe-en-rdc/10230847.html.

[9] Jeune Afrique with AFP, "Dan Gertler: l'administration Biden revient sur la dérogation accordée par Trump" [The Biden Administration Goes back on the Exemption Granted by Trump], March 3, 2021, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1133864/economie/dan-gertler-ladministration-biden-revient-sur-la-derogation-accordee-par-trump/.

the prominent activity of various rebel groups, the spread of violent criminality and the emergence of Islamist terrorism. If both the US and the EU provide technical and logistic support to the governmental forces in order to reinstall their rule over the Eastern provinces, the only military contingent that could deploy in the area is the regular Congolese army. Nevertheless, in the past, such interventions were, at the same time, considered to be not feasible because of the material shortcomings and not acceptable because of their risky nature, under the circumstances where some rebel militias and armed groups enjoy the considerable support of local populations.

Given these circumstances and directly exploiting the tragic episode of the Italian Ambassador's assassination while transporting humanitarian aid near Goma (North Kivu) in February 2021, President Tshisekedi decided to change the softer strategy of his predecessor. He denounced one of the most prominent and violent rebellious movements in the area – the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)– as a terrorist organization and multiplied the allegations according to which these movements are linked to the Islamic State Organization (ISIS). This allowed him to finally declare a state of siege in the two provinces (North Kivu and Ituri), in May 2021.[10]

This operation would not have been possible without the encouragement and the approval of his new allies, mainly the US, who endorsed Tshisekedi in his decision to act decisively and without hesitation. Apart from the contextual framework we described above, there is another explanation for the US's endorsement of the transformation of an anti-rebellious fight into an anti-terrorist campaign. In spite of the much more complex regional and local realities of the Eastern Congolese provinces that we will analyze in detail in the following section, the US preferred to operate with an over-simplification: they reduced the nebulous matrix of power relations and multidimensional conflicts of Eastern Congo to the spread of terrorism. This move that we may call *reductio ad terrorem* was beneficial for both sides, the US and the DRC governments.

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[10] Fred Bauma, "État de siège ou dysfonctionnement de l'État au Nord-Kivu" [State of Siege or State Dysfunction in North Kivu], *Congo Research Group*, July 22, 2021, http://congoresearchgroup.org/etat-de-siege-ou-dysfonctionnement-de-letat-au-nord-kivu/?lang=fr.

For its part, the US was able to place its international actions in line with the post-September 11 American foreign and security policy, which focused on the fight against terrorism and on the possibility to use pre-emptive military interventions in order to eliminate any virtual threat. According to the post-September 11 National Security Strategies and especially to those adopted in 2002 and 2006, the US should massively support the regimes that are making efforts to combat domestic and neighboring terrorist activities.[11] Thus, including a movement or a group on the list of terrorist organizations allows for a much wider margin of intervention in favor of the regime that pretends to annihilate such threat.[12] Moreover, fighting together with an overseas partner against an "evil" that had already attacked the United States reinforces the trust of American and worldwide public opinion in the US government's determination to pursue the fight against terror, even beyond their immediate interests.[13] Finally, in the aftermath of the Trump era, Washington was eager to show the new Administration's preoccupation to support the democratically elected leaders of developing countries in their efforts to achieve stabilization and to counter crime, violence and above all terrorism, under the circumstances where the retreat from Afghanistan was already seen as being at least problematic in terms of consequences.

At the same time, this approach was convergent with the interests of the DRC's central government. Claiming that the fight against the matrix of rebellious forces in Eastern Congo was actually a war against terrorism, President Tshisekedi had a wide margin of maneuver to impose the state of siege in these two most affected provinces and thus to extensively use

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[11] Richard B. Doyle, "The US National Security Strategy: Policy, Process, Problems," *Public Administration Review* 67, no. 4 (June 2007): 624-29, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2007.00748.x.

[12] US State Department, "State Department Terrorist Designations of ISIS Affiliates and Leaders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique," March 10, 2021, https://www.state.gov/state-department-terrorist-designations-of-isis-affiliates-and-leaders-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-mozambique/.

[13] Nicoleta Colopelnic, "The Discursive Road from 9/11 to Operation Iraqi Freedom," in *Radicalism, Populism, Interventionism. Three Approaches Based on Discourse Theory*, eds. Sergiu Mișcoiu, Oana Craciun and Nicoleta Colopelnic (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Fundatiei pentru Studii Europene, 2008), 70-120.

military forces in order to hunt the presumed terrorists. Additionally, in practice, all the actions of the two provincial military governing bodies could be now much more protected from the allegations of abuse and mistreatment of civilian population, as they are taken in the name of the fight against a vicious enemy who spreads only destruction and death. This operation consolidates the position of the President and gives the "Sacred Union" a tangible content, as the "maleficent otherness" is identified and the patriots need to stick together behind Tshisekedi in order to defeat terrorism and thus safeguard the country. The bet of the Congolese head of state is that if this operation turned into a success in 2021 and/or the first half of 2022, he could very well claim, without any doubt, the title of the country's supreme leader and could hope to reduce the Kabila-led opposition to a long-lasting silence.

If this strategy suits both the US and the DRC Presidency, nothing guarantees that the success of this discourse on the new war on terror will be confirmed by actual developments in the real world, on the ground. This is precisely because, as we will show in the next sections, the crisscross nature of the Eastern Congolese conflicts and the variety of features and interests of the actors involved are too complex to be caught in a single narrative based on the otherwise scary and efficient but superficial *reductio ad terrorem.*

Armed conflicts in Eastern DRC – A complex trajectory

The dimensions and the dynamics of the Congolese conflict have varied enormously over time, which has led to an increasingly complex situation. Armed violence in the eastern Congo is the direct consequence of two bloody wars: the first Congolese war between 1996 and 1997 (the overthrow of Mobutu by the revolutionary rebellion of Laurent-Desiré Kabila) and the second one between 1998 and 2002 (triggered by the self-proclaimed President Kabila who turned against those who brought him to power: Rwanda and Uganda). The peace agreement signed in Pretoria, South Africa, in December 2002, did not bring the much needed peace, on the contrary, the bloody events have continued up to now at very different

levels.[14] Nonetheless, compared to previous years, a decrease in the number of belligerents can be noticed.[15] Whereas in 2019, roughly 130 armed groups existed in the Kivus alone, the Kivu Security Tracker inventory counts around 122 across the entire eastern Congo, including North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika.[16] Recent KST data also indicates a steep rise in killings, violent deaths and other forms of violence since the end of 2019, compared to previous years.[17] This period corresponds to the new ascent of the ADF, the main actor in the theatre of violence in North Kivu.

The ADF, rebels of Ugandan origin, are considered terrorists by the Congolese state. The precursors of the ADF, the M23 group were the first to be considered by the government as "a negative terrorist force,"[18] but actually the ADF is the only one in this region to be labeled as a terrorist organization. Throughout their over 35 years' existence in the Congolese territory, the DRC authorities have designated them in a variety of ways: a serious danger to national communities, the group responsible for a series of massacres, the group that killed a national hero. Over the time, Uganda and the DRC have instrumentalized and re-instrumentalized this group in accordance with their needs. Titeca and Fahey explain how the Congolese and Ugandan governments frame events differently for different audiences. The authors tried to prove that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission's (Monusco) approach is very limited, which has led to weak and laconic analyses. Their existence brought many benefits to Uganda which completely ignored the ADF substance and turned them into international terrorists with a clear goal: between 2001 and 2012, comprehensive US military and economic aid to Uganda rose steadily from

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14 Andreea Bianca Urs, "Petit requiem pour la démocratie congolaise" [Small Requiem for Congolese Democracy], *Studia Europaea* 65, no. 2 (2020): 195-217.

15 Kivu Security Traker, "The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity, and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies," February 2021, https://kivusecurity.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/reports/39/2021%20KST%20report%20EN.pdf.

16 Kivu Security Tracker, "Armed Groups in Eastern Congo."

17 Kivu Security Tracker, "Armed Groups in Eastern Congo."

18 François Sadiki Koko, Fraternel Amuri Misako, "Le Terrorisme: Un Concept Abusé, Une Menace Réelle. Le Cas De La République Démocratique Du Congo" [Terrorism: An Abused Concept, A Real Threat. The Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo], *European Scientific Journal* 13, no. 17 (2017): 103, https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2017.v13n17p95.

$77 million to $399 million, while Uganda said it was Al-Shabaab that formed the ADF.[19] In the DRC, the official rhetoric of attributing ADF activities to Islamist terrorism was relaunched in 2014, just as spectacular crimes were taking place in Beni, such as the assassination of Colonel Mamadou Ndala followed by mass massacres.[20] Since 2019, the government response has intensified, as the government started to consider them terrorists on a large scale. These rebels were strongly associated with possible scenarios such as balkanization, the implementation of Islamism or the establishment of a caliphate in eastern DRC. In this sense, Radio France Internationale (RFI) also contributed to giving them an image of Islamist terrorists. The ADF today represents the tree that hides the forest full of riches and behind which other actors are trying to shirk their responsibility. The 2019 ADF boom sparked a series of accusations and assumptions that flooded national and international public consciousness.[21]

But how did it get here? Who are these rebels? Firstly, they are Congolese, not Ugandan, and, secondly, they are rather economic bandits who apply strategies to terrorize the population, and not Islamist terrorists. Essentially, the massacres perpetrated by the ADF take place in an economy of chaotic disorder that flourishes in a framework of insecurity.

Much of the region's economy depends on cross-border trade, cross-border transactions between Kasindi and Lubiriha (Uganda). Coffee and cocoa are the most cultivated crops in the territory of Beni. Next, wood production plays a big role in sustaining the region's economy: wood is cut in the DRC and sold outside as coming from Uganda. The ADF is said to be part of a transnational network of Muslim fundamentalists that extends to the Sahel, including Somali Al-Shabaab. This version was relaunched based on the secrets of a mysterious character who introduced himself as an ADF deserter, the famous "Mr. X." For months "Mr. X" was the informant drawn

[19] Kristof Titeca and Daniel Fahey, "The Many Faces of a Rebel Group: The Allied Democratic Forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *International Affairs* 92, no. 5 (2016): 1189-1206, https://doi.org/ 10.1111/1468-2346.12703.

[20] Boniface Musavuli, *Les massacres de Beni. Kabila, le Rwanda et les faux islamistes* [The Massacres of Beni. Kabila, Rwanda and False Islamists], Independently published, 2017, 19.

[21] Andreea Bianca Urs, "Du conflit au terrorisme en RD Congo" [From Conflict to Terrorism in the DRC], *Studia Europaea* 65, no. 1 (2020): 55-73.

from Monusco to the ADF which resulted in false and fabulous reports. Monusco has not verified the information received, the truth was revealed by Daniel Fahey who lists, in his article "The man who fooled the UN,"[22] the litany of comfort lies about the ADF.

Contrary to the constructed image, this group is not subject to any terrorist organization, or at least there is no real evidence of it; it uses terror in order to increase their profit, funding remaining essential for them. The ADF does not attack the government, they attack populations whose main activities are agriculture (production of cocoa, coffee, beans) and commerce. By attacking them, the ADF pushes them to leave their villages, to abandon their fields in order to gain supremacy in the territory to continue economic activities. It is plunder, looting and theft that also allows the ADF to finance itself and continue to survive in the DRC. Attacking the unarmed population allows them to continue to be talked about, to show that they exist and dominate the territories. Fearing for their lives, the rural population no longer goes about their business, leading to a decline in local agricultural production. The population is therefore doubly affected by the massacres: not only is agricultural production reduced, but the presence of the ADF harasses the population and monopolizes what little they produce. Thanks to their terrorist strategy, ADF have developed mechanisms to control much of the local economy and obtain illicit private gains, to win the intense struggle for access to natural resources and land. In this way, the economy becomes a permanent economy of war, with all that entails: crime, bloodshed, massacres and permanent destabilization.[23]

When did it all start? On April 18, 2019, through a message from a propaganda agency, the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for an attack in the eastern DRC, in the village of Bovata, on the border with Uganda. While ISIS reports that three Congolese soldiers were killed and five others wounded, a Monusco source confirmed the deaths of two soldiers and a civilian in the attack on the night of April 16/17, 2019. This claim is a first for the country, a unique and isolated event a few months before the rise

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[22] Daniel Fahey, "Congo's Mr. X. The Man Who Fooled the UN," in *World Policy Institute* 2, no. 33, (2016): 95.

[23] Urs, "Du conflit au terrorisme," 69.

of the ADF in November 2019. But despite these allegations, it is not possible to say whether there is a link between the Islamic State and the ADF or whether the Islamic State controls the ADF operationally. The inconsistencies between the attacks in the territory and the ISIS demands have continued until today. The press has continuously linked the ADF to ISIS and Boko Haram but without a factual basis. At the same time, during his visit in Washington in early April 2019, Felix Tshisekedi also suggested that the ADF Nalu should be registered as a terrorist organization. The president said the Islamist threat was a constant concern for him and his desire was for his country to be a member of the anti-terrorist coalition. He also expressed his fear of seeing an attempt to install a caliphate in the Beni and Butambo areas. But this "fear" seems rather opportunistically connected with the DRC President's immediate interests. "Radical Islam has become a practical tool for dictatorial regimes that need to justify their internal repression and attracts the good graces of the northern powers."[24] Thus, Islamism is a pretext to please America and this was the beginning of the story. The thesis of the installation of a caliphate in North Kivu is simply invalid since these provinces are predominantly Christian (Catholic and Protestant).

Deeply concerned about their continued survival in the DRC, the ADF operates under their own vision and ideology of death. The group is responsible for exceptional violence. According to the latest UN report, from November 2020 to March 2021, 36 incidents involving a total of 64 suspected or confirmed improvised explosive devices were confirmed by the UN experts. The areas around Kainama and Eringeti along the border of North Kivu and Ituri have been particularly contaminated by improvised explosive devices in recent months, which corresponded to an increase in the presence and attacks of ADF in the south of the territory of Irumu and in the north of the territory of Beni.[25]

In the DRC, the modus operandi represents a life and death struggle for access to resources, violence itself is used as a resource, from Leopold II

[24] Thierry Vircoulon, Jean Battory, "L'islam radical en RDC, entre mythe et manipulation" [Radical Islam in the DRC between Myth and Manipulation], French Institute for International Relations, February 2017, https://www.ifri.org/fr/publications/notes-de-lifri/lislam-radical-republique-democratique-congo-entre-mythe-manipulation, note 11.

[25] United Nations Security Council, S/2021/560, June 10, 2021, 10.

to Joseph Kabila. The rise of ADF encompasses two considerable struggles: their struggle for survival in the territory and the struggle for resources; the struggle for resources depends on their existence. Since April 2019, ISIS has claimed responsibility for an increasing number of attacks in the country. The reality of its establishment and its involvement alongside the Allied Democratic Forces have since been the subject of fierce debate.

Why DRC is an example of counterfeit terrorism

On March 10, 2021, US authorities announced that they were placing this Ugandan-born armed group on the list of terrorist groups affiliated with ISIS. The State Department explains in particular that "ISIS-RDC" – or ADF, is responsible for numerous attacks in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri.[26] According to Félix Tshisekedi, "the ADF is part of the terrorist logic advocated by the Islamic State." Also in March 2021, the Program on Extremism at George Washington University published a report[27] which analyzes multiple internal elements and strongly supports this hypothesis. This recent report from George Washington University places the genesis of these links around 2017 or even 2018, with a formalization in 2019. But making connections is one thing. To say that the ADF is under the operational control of ISIS is totally different and, in the following lines, we will see why. The manner in which the situation is depicted was carefully built in order to distract attention from the disappearance of cobalt and other mining and forestry resources and now the government has the West's support. Besides, in August 2021, President Tshisekedi authorized US anti-terrorist experts to support the Congolese army in its mission to fight the ADF.[28] According to the President, this mission should last several weeks

[26] US Department of State, "State Department Terrorist Designations of ISIS Affiliates."

[27] Tara Candland et al., "The Islamic State in Congo," George Washington University, March 2021, https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/The%20Islamic%20State%20in%20Congo%20English.pdf.

[28] Libre Afrique, "RDC: des forces spéciales américaines associés à la traque des ADF dans l'est," [DRC: American Special Forces Associated with Tracking the ADF in the East], August 16, 2021, https://afrique.lalibre.be/62994/rdc-des-forces-speciales-americaines-associes-a-la-traque-des-adf-dans-lest/.

and "fight against the ADF, a branch of ISIS, within the framework of the world coalition to defeat this terrorist group."[29] This visit will take place within the program PP4PP+P (Privileged Partnership for Peace and Prosperity + Preservation of the environment) concluded by the two states.

In recent years, through their result-oriented works, experts such as Kristof Titeca,[30] Daniel Fahey, Judith Verweijen[31] and many others, introduced a more profound approach towards the Congolese conflict. The UN group of experts assures in its December 2020 report that it was not able to confirm any direct link or support between the two organizations.[32] Then, according to the following report (10 June 2021), the UN group was unable to establish that the Islamic State directly supported the ADF or exercised command and control over them, although the ADF sought to project alignment with the ISIS.[33]

Jason Stearns, head of Congo Research Group (GEC), was the first to react and explain why it is dangerous to fall into this trap. Stearns highlights that the sanctions are not a problem, but the general approach of seeing the violence around Beni as a foreign Islamist terrorist threat does not allow sufficient consideration of other factors that are more important, such as state weakness and local conflicts.[34] From our own perspective, before considering the terrorist version, it is necessary to investigate two essential aspects: (1) the metamorphosable character of ADF and (2) the Christian background in the DRC.

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[29] Candland, "Islamic State in Congo."

[30] Kristof Titeca, "Jihadis in Congo? Probably Not," *The Washington Post*, September 27, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/09/27/heres-why-its-a-problem-that-congos-u-n-peacekeeping-force-is-blaming-international-jihadis-for-these-killings-and-attacks/.

[31] Daniel Fahey, Judith Verweijen, "A Closer Look at Congo's Islamist Rebels," *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/09/30/closer-look-congos-islamic-rebels.

[32] United Nations Security Council, S/2020/1283, December 23, 2020.

[33] United Nations Security Council, S/2021/560, June 10, 2021.

[34] Romain Gras, "État islamique dans l'est de la RDC: Il faut privilégier les approches non militaires" [Islamic State in the East of the DRC: We Need to Prioritise Non-Military Approaches], *Jeune Afrique*, March 17, 2021, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1138845/politique/etat-islamique-dans-lest-de-la-rdc-il-faut-privilegier-les-approches-non-militaires/.

Usually, ADF took advantage of local conflicts, such as the Nande conflict.[35] As previously mentioned, the ADF is deeply concerned about its survival in the territory and the metamorphosable character of this group pushes them to collect benefits no matter where they come from. They compete to assume public authority over people and resources. This is why both the ADF and the IS have an interest in suggesting that they have sealed an alliance, at least at the command level. For instance, both suggest there is a possibility that ADF will receive funding from ISIS, but this cannot be proven. Also, we do not know the related links regarding the supply and trafficking of weapons. According to Stearns, targeting funding is one impactful way to favor non-military approaches.[36] The more Daesh is seen as the enemy in eastern Congo, the more we overlook other factors that contribute to the conflict. In addition, the more we put on a military response, the more we undermine the accountability of the state to the population.[37]

Another important aspect is Congolese Christianity. Muslims are sociologically a small minority; they represent approximately 1% of the population, so from the outset, there is no solid social basis for development in a country dominated by ultra-Christian influences. The Islamism of the ADF seems superficial, especially after the rupture of 2014 (the arrest of Mukulu, former leader of the group). Moreover, investigations carried out in this direction confirm that the killers do not take an interest in the religion of their victims before killing them, and that there has been at least one case of a Muslim being killed.[38] The ADF never explicitly claimed they wish to promote Islamism in North Kivu. On the contrary, there is a strong affirmation of nationalist consciousness in North Kivu and South Kivu. It has been found that it is mainly thanks to the resistance, nationalism and patriotism of the populations of these two regions that the rebellion's plans have always failed. The reaction of the people is revealing. As the massacres cause chaos, the only form of structuring life in insecurity is to make tribal logic the way of life and sometimes even to equip oneself with self-defense

[35] Jason Stearns, "DRC: Designating the ADF," Congo Research Group, March 24, 2021, http://congo researchgroup.org/drc-designating-the-adf/.

[36] Gras, "État islamique dans l'est de la RDC."

[37] Stearns, "DRC: Designating the ADF."

[38] Urs, "Du conflit au terrorisme," 67.

forces which will be tempted to turn into attacking power to avoid being invaded by the presence of aliens who are blamed for all ills. The local populations decide to defend their land and their identity also by attributing the whole range of massacres to aggressors who come from elsewhere (Ugandans, Rwandans) or who have other identities (Islamists, Westerners).[39]

In a country where objectives are achieved with weapons in hand, but also where the president of National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) is elected by religious denominations,[40] daily realities are far more complex, ambiguous and must be analyzed with internal landmarks. Consequently, the new orientation of the president is dangerous: chasing validation on the American stage, he forgets that his state is the key player in the resolution of this endless conflict. Actually, this *reductio ad terrorem* is the connecting line between the two states but it is not sustainable, because this approach could have long-term side effects. As we can conclude from the previous lines, Tshisekedi has gradually prepared for this victory since 2019. The state's weakness, and sometimes its complicity, can intensify the large number of local conflicts which, summed up, represent the entire endless Congolese conflict.

Conclusions

We observed that terrorism is an overused concept in DRC. Confronted by a complex type of conflict and echoing the new DRC President's discourse, the US bet on the already-classic "War on Terror" formula regardless of the specific internal landmarks of the DRC. In doing so, they reinforced Tshisekedi's relative position in the domestic political confrontation with the former President Joseph Kabila. But it obscured the understanding of the far more complex situation produced by the rebellions in the East. Thus, *reductio ad terrorem* offered a convenient short-term solution for both the USA and the Congolese governments, yet a fallacious one as it

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39 Urs, "Du conflit au terrorisme," 69.

40 Stanis Bujakera Tshiamala, "Ceni en RDC: que pèsent vraiment les confessions religieuses?" [Ceni in the DRC: What Do Religious Denominations Really Weigh?], *Jeune Afrique*, August 2, 2021, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1212092/politique/ceni-en-rdc-que-pesent-vraiment-les-confessions-religieuses/.

did not address the real more complex and less easy to target the causes of structural violence in eastern Congo.

By studying the way an anti-secessionist campaign was transformed into a regional fight against terrorism, part of a global two-decade-long American-driven "War on Terror," we were able to show the critical importance of the discursive articulations in legitimizing the changes in the strategies and positions of international actors. More generally, we also revealed the contingent nature of the discursive-driven representation of social and political reality and the capacity of nodal points (or key-concepts), such as "terrorism," to serve as articulatory centers for politically convenient descriptions of the existing context and justifying military and other authoritative action.

Based on the analysis we conducted in this article, further research could follow several paths. They could focus on the exploration of the medium-term results of the current anti-terrorist campaign in eastern Congo, both in terms of US-DRC relations and the virtual future engagement of other regional and international actors. Then, other researchers could compare the emerging Washington-Kinshasa axis to similar international "couples" made of great powers and developing states. Finally, some other papers could concentrate on the merits and limits of strategic discourses in contexts of conflict by trying to delineate between the situations where such approaches work and those where they are not validated by incremental developments.

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Metaphors in International Cooperation

GABRIELA CHEFNEUX

1. Theoretical framework

The first part of the article provides a definition of metaphors from the cognitive perspective, starting with Max Blake, Lakoff and Johnson and Kővecses; it describes the main features of metaphors, with an emphasis on their cultural and ideological features and classifies metaphors; the last part briefly presents the use of metaphor in political discourse.

1.1 Definition, features and classification of metaphors

Metaphors have been defined as a figure of speech which involves an implied comparison between two terms, where the features of one term are transferred to the other; metaphors indicate a resemblance between the two terms where "one thing is compared with another by saying that one is the other."[1]

Metaphors have been long considered as having an aesthetic character, specific of literary style, but in the 1960s Max Black analyzed them as having a cognitive dimension.

According to cognitive linguistics, metaphors organize human perception, as they explain abstract concepts in concrete ways. Johnson and Lakoff (1980) state that they are a valuable cognitive tool, a fundamental way for people to understand and explain reality. The two authors explain the origin of metaphors as based in human bodily experience: for example, early childhood experience accounts for the positive value of "up" as contrasted to the negative value of "down." Kővecses[2] comments that it is the very

[1] Zoltán Kővecses, *Metaphor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), ix.
[2] Kővecses, *Metaphor,* 56.

notion of embodiment which separates the cognitive linguistic view from the traditional one.

However, Lakoff and Johnson's theory was criticized by linguistics such as Mottier (2008) and Goately (1998, 2007), who agree on the experiential basis but add to it the cultural aspect, which accounts for the particular features of metaphors, even if based on bodily experience. "Body and bodily experience are affected by culture, so the fact that bodily experience gives an experiential basis for metaphors does not entail that all kinds of bodily experience are universal."[3]

Therefore, metaphors are a way of thinking one thing (A) in terms of another (B), where A is called the topic or target and B is the vehicle or source.[4] The similarities and differences between the two objects are established by mapping, defined below: "presupposing that the two domains are already structurally similar, metaphors work by projecting one relatively well-understood set of ideas onto a domain that is problematic, rather than by simply expressing a pre-existing and objective similarity."[5]

So, the direction is from the concrete to the more abstract thing or concept and grasping the mappings is understanding the metaphor. However, as many linguists have pointed out, the similarities between the source and the target are of an artificial or subjective manner, as indicated by the concept of partial mapping which states that these resemblances do not pre-exist but have to be identified, a process which may be more or less obvious. Another concept emphasizing the subjective nature of metaphors is that of partial metaphorical utilization, defined by Kővecses as the emphasis given to certain characteristics of an object over other ones.[6] The linguist also points to the ideological feature of metaphors as, during the mapping process, certain aspects of the target are foregrounded, while others are backgrounded. By the subjective selection of the common features shared by the target and the source, specific ideas come to be supported in a covert manner, thus influencing people's way of thinking in a more or less obvious manner.

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[3] Andrew Goately, *The Language of Metaphors* (London: Routledge, 1997), 216.
[4] Goately, *The Language of Metaphors*, 11.
[5] Paul Chilton, *Security Metaphors: Cold War Discourse From Containment to Common House* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 106.
[6] Kővecses, *Metaphor,* 94.

Metaphors limit or bias our perception, forcing particular understandings: "Metaphors may have a negative effect on thinking by providing a false sense of understanding and excluding alternative conceptualization, or may structure the Target domain in ways which are too simple or too partial. They have a tendency to form regimes of truth to create a model of reality – thinking makes it so. We need a variety of metaphors to survive or a suspicion about all metaphor if we are to be open to the realities beyond it."[7]

However, metaphors are not adopted uncritically and their intended audiences should not be considered as unconsciously accepting them; in many cases the metaphors are processed, analyzed, and critically interpreted, which leads to the disclosure of their bias.

Kővecses's classification of metaphors takes into account several criteria: ontology and orientation, sources used, complexity, diversity, novelty, and cultural variation, each presented below.[8]

Metaphors can be ontological or orientational; the former type is expressed in terms of general objects or substances, without further specification, while the latter resorts to spatial orientation (up – down, in –out).[9]

Conceptual metaphors, based on mapping, are used to describe more abstract terms by resorting to more concrete sources. As far as the domains used for the source or vehicle are concerned, there are more common ones, such as the human body, health and illness, animals, plants, buildings and constructions, machines and tools, games and sports, business, cooking and food, heat and cold, light and darkness, forces, movement and direction.[10] These domains are manifested in texts by means of linguistic metaphoric expressions which are keywords that occur with a high level of frequency in a particular discourse. Charteris-Black comments on the divorce metaphor for the Brexit, which was very often used; such metaphors trigger instantly moral intuitions from the basis of judgment, this becoming a powerful means

7 Kővecses, *Metaphor,* xi.
8 Kővecses, *Metaphor,* 33-48.
9 Kővecses, *Metaphor,* 40-48.
10 Kővecses, *Metaphor,* 18-30.

for creating frames, allegories and scenarios by first engaging attention and then developing a storyline. [11]

Another classification based on the same criteria, namely the source domain used, is that of the Great Chain metaphors and the Event Structure metaphors (Kővecses 2010, Lakoff and Turner 1989, Musolff 2005); the former resorts to sources such as the human body, buildings, machines, plans, etc., while the latter resorts to concepts such as location, force, motion. The Event Structure metaphor organizes a variety of events in terms of spatial relationships, leading to such basic metaphorical mappings as states are locations, changes are movements, action is self-propelled motion, progress is motion forward, purposes of actions are destinations, difficulties are obstacles etc.[12]

Metaphors have been also classified as simple, using one single important feature of an entity, or complex, made of several simple metaphors. Goately[13] differentiates between diversified ones (where the target is expressed by bringing together several sources (the example provided being failure referred to as a division, shipwreck or sinking) and multivalent, where several targets are used to describe the same source (the example being liquid presented as crowds, traffic, emotions.

In terms of novelty, metaphors can be live or original and dead, the latter class being part of the lexicon and sometimes not perceived as metaphors by the language users. Probably, the most original metaphors are the ones used in literary style, their novelty making them shocking, sometimes difficult to understand, but also memorable. The more or less conventional nature of metaphor can be represented as a scale, along which metaphors may move, from more to less conventional. It is often the case that conventional metaphors are sometimes expressed in unconventional ways.

From a cultural perspective, metaphors can vary within one culture (intracultural) or between several cultures (intracultural).

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[11] Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Metaphors of Brexit. No Cherries on the Cake* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 233-38.

[12] Andreas Musolff, *Metaphor and Political Discourse. Analogical Reasoning in Debates about Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 43.

[13] Goately, *The Language of Metaphors*, 12-13.

In terms of the classification presented, the paper analyzes the metaphors by identifying the source domains and the types (ontological or orientational, multivalent or diversified, simple or complex) with the aim of identifying similarities and differences between the metaphors used in the two types of newspaper articles.

1.2 Metaphors in politics

Metaphors are used in a variety of discourses, such as literary, journalistic, political, or advertising as well as in non-linguistic texts, such as images.

Metaphors have been thoroughly analyzed in political discourse, where they are considered to have an additional pragmatic value, since they convey not only ideas but also emotions.[14]

Political discourse is characterized by competitive debate and dispute because its participants aim to gain a power advantage over each other and/or to persuade their audiences (members of the same party or adversary ones, voters, mass media representatives) of the position they support. Both aims can be linguistically achieved in a variety of ways, one of which being metaphors. By resorting to metaphors politicians offer their audiences a simplification of concepts, which is both a help but also an impediment in understanding the complexity of specific situations; metaphors trigger specific scenarios and as such, they can be used to promote ideological stances. Musolff notices that metaphors can be changed so as to provide different scenarios and as such they influence cognition in two ways, being "both the product of and a means to shape thought, emotion and social perception";[15] the inferences they trigger create assumptions in the audience's mind related to roles, norms and values. Used in argumentation, they become warrants, which can lead to fallacies, as analogical arguments may be deceiving.

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[14] Andreas Musolff, *Political Metaphor Analysis Discourse and Scenarios* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 58.

[15] Musolff, *Political Metaphor Analysis Discourse and Scenario*, 137.

Due to their cultural character metaphors can be misinterpreted by the speaker and the interlocutor, one such famous example being the house metaphor used both by Richard von Weizsacker and Gorbachev on the occasion of the German President's visit to Moscow. The two heads of state referred to the country by using the metaphor of the house, but each had his own understanding of a house – the German president probably had in mind one inhabited by one single family, while the Russian president thought about a block of flats, the flats being inhabited by individual families;[16] thus when discussing visits into the house, the two politicians were actually referring to different things.

The next part of the paper analyzes comparatively Romanian and US newspapers articles related to international cooperation. For the purpose of the current analysis, metaphors are considered as having a dual function – the foremost is the cognitive one, as they help the readers to understand abstract concepts, while the second is a stylistic one, its function being to surprise or shock the readers, and thus to make them consider the ideas discussed in a more careful manner. The aim of the analysis is to identify the types of metaphors used to describe international relations between China and the USA in the two types of newspapers in terms of source, complexity and cultural variation, the hypothesis being that the existing differences are mainly generated by cultural differences.

2. Data analysis

The analysis is conducted on eight articles randomly selected from the Internet. The sample is a non-probability and convenience one, representing the beginning of a wider work on metaphor analysis. The articles selected were uploaded during the period June 2020-March 2021 from the sites of broadsheet newspapers that have a wide circulation and readership in the two countries; the selection principle was that there be an equal number of articles and that the articles be on the topic of the international relations between the USA and China. The four US articles are all taken from *LA Times* while three of the Romanian articles come from

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[16] Musolff, *Political Metaphor Analysis Discourse and Scenario*, 128.

Adevărul and one from Jurnalul.ro. The list of articles selected is provided below:

US articles

1. "The first China-Biden administration talks are over. It was a markedly acrimonious start";[17]
2. "At annual political meetings, China lays out its plan to surpass the U.S";[18]
3. "China can expect Biden to keep pushing for change, with help from U.S. allies";[19]
4. "Op-Ed: China may be overplaying its hand in its crackdown on Hong Kong."[20]

Romanian articles

1. "SUA anunță NATO că va consolida apărarea colectivă"[21] [The US announces that NATO will strengthen the collective defense];
2. "Dezbatere Historia Live, ora 12.00: Dialog furios SUA-China. Ce va urma?"[22] [History Live Debate, 12 o'clock. Angry USA-China dialogue. What comes next?];

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[17] Tracy Wilkinson, "The First China-Biden Administration Talks Are over. It Was a Markedly Acrimonious Start," *LA Times,* March 19, 2021, https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-03-19/china-biden-anchorage-talks-accusations.

[18] Alice Su, "At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S.," *LA Times*, March 11, 2021, https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2021-03-11/china-two-sessions-east-rising-us-competition.

[19] Alice Su, Shashank Bengali, Tracy Wilkinson, "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change, with Help from U.S. Allies," *LA Times*, November 11, 2020, https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-11-11/what-approach-will-joe-biden-use-for-dealing-with-u-s-rival-china.

[20] Mark Thiessen, Mathew Lee, "Op-Ed: China May Be Overplaying Its Hand in Its crackdown on Hong Kong," *LA Times*, March 18, 2021, https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/ 2021-03-18/us-china-spar-in-first-face-to-face-meeting-under-biden.

[21] Viorica Dănilă, "SUA anunță NATO că va consolida apărarea colectivă" [The US Announces that NATO Will Strengthen the Collective Defense], *Adevărul*, March 12, 2021, https://adevarul.ro/international/statele-unite/sua-anunta-nato-consolida-apararea-colectiva-contracararea-rusiei-1_60570f3b5163ec4271227c3c/index.html.

[22] Historia ro, "Dezbatere Historia Live, ora 12.00: Dialog furios SUA-China. Ce va urma?" [History Live Debate, 12 o'clock. Angry USA-China Dialogue. What Comes Next?], *Adevărul*, March 19, 2021, https://adevarul.ro/international/in-lume/dezbatere-historia-live-ora-1200-dialog-furios-sua-china-urma-1_6054718a5163ec42710fc4d3/index.html.

3. "Deşteptarea euro-atlantică în faţa ameninţării chineze"[23] [The Euro-Atlantic awakening to the Chinese threat];
4. "China se ia la trântă cu SUA și pentru controlul Internetului"[24] [China begins to wrestle with the US for the Internet control too].

The analysis focuses on the metaphors used to describe the political relations between China and the USA and it centers on the sources of metaphors; it is organized in a comparative way – each of the sources being presented for the two types of articles.

2.1 The war metaphor

The war metaphor appears in all the selected US articles, as indicated by the lexis: "defensive response," "hit a note of caution," "launched into mutual recriminations," "China's harsh repression," "Yang attacked the United States," "Trump… hit Chinese products with high tariffs war," "Blinken shot back"[25] or "The most effective way … is to build a united front of U.S. allies and partners to confront China's abusive behaviors and human rights violations"[26], or "Underscoring the animosity, the State Department blasted the Chinese delegation for violating an agreed upon two-minute time limit for opening statements."[27]

The war metaphor is a multivalent one, being used for a variety of target domains – international relationships, international trade, political negotiations, speaking style.

The war metaphor appears in all the four Romanian articles too, although with fewer instances of lexical realizations. Some of these

[23] Matei Dobrovie, "Deşteptarea euro-atlantică în faţa ameninţării chineze" [The Euro-Atlantic Awakening to the Chinese Threat], *Adevărul*, June 30, 2020 https://adevarul.ro/international/in-lume/desteptarea-euro-atlantica-fata-amenintarii-chineze-1_5efb4efb5163ec42717e7abb/index.html.

[24] Şerban Mihăilă,"China se ia la trântă cu SUA și pentru controlul Internetului" [China Begins to Wrestle with the US for the Internet Control Too], *Jurnalul.ro*, March 9, 2021, https://jurnalul.ro/stiri/externe/china-se-ia-la-tranta-cu-sua-si-pentru-controlul-internetului-867966.html.

[25] Wilkinson, "The First China-Biden Administration Talks Are over."

[26] Su, "At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S."

[27] Thiessen and Lee, "Op-Ed: China May be Overplaying Its Hand."

realizations are: “advantage,” “attacks,” “positions of force”[28] or “common front,” “the threat represented by China,”[29] “SUA anunţă că NATO va consolida apărarea colectivă”[30] [The US announces that NATO will strengthen the collective defense] or “Beijingul atacă însă acum supremația americană şi în domeniul Internetului”[31] [Beijing now attacks the American supremacy in the Internet area too] or “Şi pentru a-şi îndeplini noua ambiție, chinezii înrolează în momentul de față cât mai multe state, înregimentându-le la o altă inițiativă internațională condusă de ei”[32] [and, to fulfill their recent ambition, the Chinese are currently enlisting as many states as possible, drafting them into another international initiative led by them].

In the Romanian articles the war metaphor is also multivalent, as it is used for targets such as international relationships, trading relations, censorship, IT.

The metaphor is highly frequent in both articles, the reason being probably its dynamic and shocking nature. However, its recurrent use in articles related to the international relations between the US and China constantly alludes to a tension between the states and maintains the conflicting character of the relations.

2.2 The people metaphor

This metaphor also appears very often in both types of articles, being predominantly used as a diversified metaphor – several sources (human activities and relations, physical and mental traits) to describe a target.

The countries are personified as conducting human activities – “China lays out its plan,”[33] “hails its ongoing recovery,” “has hopes,” “tames the virus,” “wants to surpass the US.”[34]

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[28] Historia ro, “Dezbatere Historia Live, ora 12.00: Dialog furios SUA-China. Ce va urma?.”
[29] Dobrovie, “Deşteptarea euro-atlantică în faţa ameninţării chineze.”
[30] Dănilă, “SUA anunță NATO că va consolida apărarea colectivă.”
[31] Mihăilă, “China se ia la trântă cu SUA și pentru controlul Internetului.”
[32] Mihăilă, “China se ia la trântă cu SUA și pentru controlul Internetului.”
[33] Su, “At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S.”
[34] Su, “At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S.”

States, presented as individuals, enter in different relations with other states, relations which are depicted in physical or romantic terms: "In Washington, Biden said he was satisfied with the meetings despite the frigid and sometimes rambunctious tone,"[35] or "Trump began his administration by tearing up a 12-nation trade agreement, […] leaving Asian countries feeling jilted."[36] The relationships between countries are presented as close, intense, cold, or neglected: "…while neglecting long-standing American friends in the region."[37]

Countries display human mental and physical traits; they try to impress other countries with their strength. They have muscles – "China in recent years has emerged as a major world power, flexing economic and military muscle in the South China Sea, on its border with India and across entire continents"[38] – and eyes: "China is eyeing the U.S. election of Joe Biden as the next president warily."[39]

The family metaphor is also present – politicians are presented as heads of family who speak like parents to foreign countries: "Trump scolded Asian nations for failing to buy enough U.S. goods."[40]

Sometimes complex metaphors are used – the people metaphor is combined with the war one: the USA and China are people fighting: "Many Chinese resent what they see as U.S. bullying of China."[41]

Romanian newspapers also use personification to describe international relations; states are allies and partners: "Întâlnirile de la Bruxelles reafirmă angajamentul Statelor Unite faţă de aliaţii şi partenerii noştri europeni[42] [the meetings in Brussels restate the US's commitment to our Europan allies and partners]. Countries react like people – they are angry, furious, etc.: "Guvernul va încerca să domolească furia SUA"[43] [the government will try to quench USA's anger] and conduct human activities –

[35] Wilkinson, "The First China-Biden Administration Talks Are over."
[36] Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
[37] Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
[38] Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
[39] Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
[40] Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
[41] Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
[42] Dănilă, "SUA anunță NATO că va consolida apărarea colectivă."
[43] Historia ro, "Dezbatere Historia Live, ora 12.00: Dialog furios SUA-China. Ce va urma?."

they have a common agenda,[44] or wake up: "Pandemia de coronavirus care s-a răspândit în toată lumea din cauza muşamalizării iniţiale a epidemiei de către regimul comunist chinez a dus la o trezire forţată a europenilor faţă de esenţa acestuia"[45] [The coronavirus pandemic which has spread world-wide as the result of the initial cover-up of the epidemic by the Chinese communist regime has led to a forced awakening of the Europeans to its essence]. They also have human organs – for example arms: "companie despre care a afirmat din nou că 'este un braţ al statului poliţienesc al PCC'"[46] [company about which he stated again that 'it is an arm of the Chinese Communist Party's police state'].

Countries can die as the result of the effects of foreign policy: "sufocarea unor ţări prin îndatorare pentru investiţii chinezeşti îndoielnice în infrastructura mare în cadrul proiectului-mamut Belt and Road"[47] [the choking of some countries, the choking of some countries by indebting them to doubtful Chinese investments in the big infrastructure as part of the giant Belt and Road project].

Like in the US articles, the people metaphor is also a multivalent one, to describe countries and companies.

2.3 The building and household metaphor

This metaphor is used only once in the US articles to describe USA's way of dealing with foreign policy – "not trying to sweep them [problems with China] under a rug."[48] One of the Romanian article also resorts to this metaphor to describe foreign policies: Oficialul Departamentului de Stat al SUA a subliniat că Washingtonul va continua să insiste asupra menţinerii 'politicii uşilor deschise' ale NATO"[49] [A US State department official emphasized that Washington will maintain NATO's 'open door' policy].

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[44] Dănilă, "SUA anunță NATO că va consolida apărarea colectivă."
[45] Dobrovie, "Deşteptarea euro-atlantică în faţa ameninţării chineze."
[46] Dobrovie, "Deşteptarea euro-atlantică în faţa ameninţării chineze."
[47] Dobrovie, "Deşteptarea euro-atlantică în faţa ameninţării chineze."
[48] Wilkinson, "The First China-Biden Administration Talks Are over."
[49] Dănilă, "SUA anunță NATO că va consolida apărarea colectivă."

2.4 The game metaphor

In the US articles this metaphor is diversified as there are references to games, gambling, performance and sports.

Politics is described as a game where the countries are the players (which is also a complex metaphor as it includes personification too): "America's return to multilateralism is welcome as a stabilizing force and important player in global issues such as climate change"[50] (US A3). At other times, the countries are players who may be bluffing: "China may be overplaying its hand in its crackdown on Hong Kong."[51]

Political meetings are presented as a performance – "the Delegates at China's National People's Congress applaud the votes support of a plan,"[52] which induces the idea of falsity. Countries are presented as racing against each other in an attempt to come first in innovation and technology: "But at home, officials and state media speak openly about racing to beat the U.S., especially in technology"[53] or "By 2035, the draft said, China should have achieved 'significant breakthroughs in core technologies' and become a leading nation in innovation." [54]

The race metaphor is sometimes overtly associated with danger – the race is run by the US to protect itself: "They know we are in serious strategic competition with China, they consider China to be the No. 1 threat, by far, to our interests."[55]

The same combination (race and danger) appears in Romanian articles when describing China: "China şi-a propus să ajungă cea mai puternică economie a lumii până la sfârşitul acestui deceniu şi cea mai dominantă forță militară a planetei până în 2050."[56] [China has set as its goal to become the world's strongest economy by the end of this decade and the planet's most dominant military power by 2050].

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[50] Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
[51] Thiessen and Lee, "Op-Ed: China May Be Overplaying Its Hand."
[52] Su, "At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S."
[53] Su, "At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S."
[54] Su, "At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S."
[55] Su et al., "China can expect Biden to keep pushing for change."
[56] Mihăilă, "China se ia la trântă cu SUA și pentru controlul Internetului."

The performance metaphor appears in the Romanian articles too, being used to describe a diplomatic meeting: "jurnaliştii au putut să rămână în sală timp de mai bine de o oră, asistând la un spectacol diplomatic fără precedent"[57] [the journalists could stay in the room for longer than an hour, witnessing an unprecedented diplomatic performance], which brings to mind the falsity of diplomacy and people's lack of trust in it.

Diplomatic talks are also presented as boxing matches, as the collocation "the first round" implies. In this way aggressive relationships are suggested, further strengthened by metaphorical realizations of the type tough exchanges and direct replies: "Prima rundă a întâlnirii şefilor diplomaţiilor din Statele Unite şi China ce se desfăşoară în Alaska a început cu un schimb dur de replici şi acuzaţii directe schimbate fără perdea în faţa presei din întrega lume"[58] [the first round of the head diplomats from the USA and China taking place in Alaska started with a tough exchange of replies and direct accusation, overtly made before the press from all over the world].

Sports are also referred to, as indicated by the collocation fair play: "China trebuie să fie determinată să joace corect"[59] [China must be made to play fair].

To conclude, games and sports are a very frequently used source domain in these articles, being used in such a way as to suggest lack of confidence, competition and distrust as characteristics of the relation between the USA and China.

2.5 The science and technology metaphor

The science source domain is varied – it makes reference to medicine, physics, mechanics, etc. Medicine is referred to both as a modern science – "the flaws of a fractured America"[60] or as an older one, as indicated by the reference to humoural theories of the Middle Ages – "the Chinese were less sanguine."[61] Other sciences that are mentioned are chemistry and mechanics,

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57 Historia ro, "Dezbatere Historia Live, ora 12.00: Dialog furios SUA-China. Ce va urma?."
58 Historia ro, "Dezbatere Historia Live, ora 12.00: Dialog furios SUA-China. Ce va urma?."
59 Dobrovie, "Deşteptarea euro-atlantică în faţa ameninţării chineze."
60 Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
61 Wilkinson, "The First China-Biden Administration Talks Are over."

the former used to describe the assimilation of ethnic minorities – "Xi also continued to push for assimilation of ethnic minorities"[62] – and the latter to describe ways of opposing the Chinese world-wide influence: "The loose partnership of four large democracies has long been seen as a possible counterweight to Chinese influence and military power in the Indo-Pacific,"[63] and "China can't afford to ignore more than half the global economy. That gives us substantial leverage to shape the rules of the road."[64] This last example includes again a complex metaphor, which combines mechanics and journey.

The lexical metaphorical realizations also point to science as a source domain: adjectives such as fray- "frayed US relationship with China"[65] or the verb disintegrate – "But the relationship disintegrated after the novel coronavirus first detected in China's Wuhan province spread across the globe and unleashed a public health and economic disaster."[66]

The science metaphor appears in the Romanian articles too, as suggested by the following metaphorical lexical realizations such as: reconfiguration, structure, paradigm. The European Unions' and USA's relationship with China can be reconfigured "partenerii transatlantici au şansa să-şi reconfigureze total relaţia cu Beijingul"[67] [the Transatlantic partners can fully restructure the relation with Beijing], the international dialogue is a structure – "Structura de dialog permanent euroatlantic pe tema relaţiei cu China va fi constituită"[68] [the Euroatlantic structure of permanent dialogue on the topic of the relation with China will be set up], and trade relies on a paradigm: "nu este vorba despre a nu mai face afaceri cu China, ci despre a schimba paradigma, pe o bază de echitate şi reciprocitate"[69] [it is not about not trading with China but about changing the paradigm on a basis of equity and reciprocity]. Physics and mechanics

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62 Su, "At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S."
63 Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
64 Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
65 Wilkinson, "The First China-Biden Administration Talks Are over."
66 Thiessen and Lee, "Op-Ed: China May Be Overplaying Its Hand in Its Crackdown on Hong Kong."
67 Dobrovie, "Deşteptarea euro-atlantică în faţa ameninţării chineze."
68 Dobrovie, "Deşteptarea euro-atlantică în faţa ameninţării chineze."
69 Dobrovie, "Deşteptarea euro-atlantică în faţa ameninţării chineze."

are also present: the power is projected: "Acesta este un plan pentru a proiecta puterea dincolo de China, spre Europa şi Asia"[70] [this is a plan to project power beyond China, towards Europe and Africa] and the relationships can be decoupled: "insistențele cu care administrația Trump le cere 'decuplarea' de China'"[71] [the insistence with which the Trump administration requires the "decoupling" from China**].**

There is a variety of scientific areas used in both types of articles, from older science (the humoural theory) to modern physics and mechanics.

2.6 The road metaphor

The road metaphor, lexically realized as road, journey, path, is of a diversified type and used to describe the country's progress, normal relations, or negotiations. The metaphor presents the country's development: "This came from self-confidence in our path"[72] or normal relations: "Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said Thursday that China hoped the meeting would 'push Sino-U.S. relations back on the right track of healthy and stable development'"[73]

Negotiations are a road – The US and China should meet halfway, to indicate the country's goodwill: "'We hope the new American administration will meet the Chinese side halfway to focus on cooperation and manage differences,' Le said,"[74] while avenue is used to suggest a wider range of possible future political relations: "One avenue for Biden's multilateral response to China would be a continuation in Trump's interest in the Quad."[75]

No instances of the road metaphor have been identified in the four Romanian articles; the reason may be that while US articles describe both present and future, the Romanian ones comment only on present situations.

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70 Mihăilă,"China se ia la trântă cu SUA și pentru controlul Internetului."
71 Mihăilă, "China se ia la trântă cu SUA și pentru controlul Internetului."
72 Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
73 Su, "At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S.."
74 Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
75 Su et al. "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."

2.7 The animal metaphor

There are few animal metaphors in both types of articles: there is a reference to wolves – "Zhao Lijian, one of China's famed Wolf Warriors, so-named for their practice of aggressive diplomacy negative,"[76] which suggests danger and connects politicians to aggression and a reference to birds of prey in one of the Romanian articles, used to describe China's foreign policy: "practicile economice prădătoare ale autorităţilor de la Beijing, care încearcă să forţeze naţiunile să facă afaceri cu Huawei"[77] [the predatory economic practices of the Beijing authorities who try to force nations into making business with Huawei]. China is presented in both instances as a dangerous partner.

2.8 The trade metaphor

In one of the US articles, trade is used as a source domain to describe the spreading of ideas and concepts: "he [Trump] called on the United States to stop attempting to export its version of democracy."[78] In one Romanian article, trade as source is used for the same purpose: "Diplomaţia agresivă a ajutoarelor şi încercarea Chinei de a-şi vinde modelul autoritar"[79] [the aggressive diplomacy of relief and China's attempt to sell its authoritarian model]. As in many of the previous cases discussed above, the trade metaphor is a complex one, as it combines with countries as people, thus involving personification.

2.9 The nature metaphor

The lexical realizations for China's home and foreign policy are presented with reference to natural disasters, for example a volcano eruption in the US article: "Mass protests erupted in the region last year over the imposition of more Mandarin-language instruction in elementary schools,"[80]

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[76] Wilkinson, "The First China-Biden Administration Talks Are over."
[77] Historia ro, "Dezbatere Historia Live, ora 12.00: Dialog furios SUA-China. Ce va urma?."
[78] Wilkinson, "The First China-Biden Administration Talks Are over."
[79] Historia ro, "Dezbatere Historia Live, ora 12.00: Dialog furios SUA-China. Ce va urma?."
[80] Su, "At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S."

and floods in the Romanian one: "valul de fake news-uri şi dezinformări"[81] [the wave of fake news and misinformation].

2.10 The craft metaphor

Crafts are used to refer to the difficulty of maintaining good international relations, which involve a lot of effort as they need "forging": "Trump had taken pride in forging what he saw as a strong relationship with Chinese leader Xi Jinping."[82] In other cases, international relations and the work done to maintain them are presented by means of the farming metaphor: "At the same time, Biden and his advisors indicate they would be willing to open or cultivate some areas of cooperation with China."[83] No metaphors related to crafts have been identified in the four Romanian articles.

2.11 The mythology metaphor

In the US articles there are references to the Greek mythology when describing attempts to improve international relations: It will be tricky for either China or the U.S. to "extend the first olive branch"[84] while in the Romanian articles, reference is made to giants: "administrația Trump a presat principalele puteri mondiale să renunțe la colaborarea cu gigantul din China"[85] [the Trump administration put pressure on the main world powers to give up cooperating with the giant in China]. Describing China as a giant triggers in the readers' mind the idea of strength and danger.

2.13. The finance metaphor

This source domain has been found only in one US article: "The Trump administration has received some credit."[86]

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[81] Dobrovie, "Deşteptarea euro-atlantică în faţa ameninţării chineze."
[82] Thiessen and Lee, "Op-Ed: China May Be Overplaying Its Hand in Its Crackdown on Hong Kong."
[83] Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
[84] Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."
[85] Mihăilă, "China se ia la trântă cu SUA și pentru controlul Internetului."
[86] Su et al., "China Can Expect Biden to Keep Pushing for Change."

2. 14. The movement metaphor

This is an orientation type of metaphor. While moving forward has positive connotations, being used to describe the country's progress e.g. "the best is still ahead of us,"[87] lack of movement has negative connotations, being related to inactivity and recession: "The United States' designation of China's actions in Xinjiang as 'genocide' are a maneuver to 'hold back China's development,' said Wang, the foreign minister."[88]

Accumulation is good, since more is better, as indicated by the positive way in which information about increased figures allotted to research and development is presented: "A draft of the next five-year plan announced at this week's meetings included a boost in spending of more than 7% each year on research and development."[89]

In the Romanian articles, the same type of orientational metaphors is used: moving forward is appreciated: "Instituirea unui mecanism de dialog permanent între SUA şi UE legat de China este un prim pas binevenit de conştientizare a problemei."[90] [The setting up of a mechanism of continuous dialogue between the USA and Eu related to China is a first welcome step on becoming aware of the problem]. The instances of orientational metaphor are far fewer than those of conceptual metaphors in both types of articles.

3. Conclusions

The analysis of the eight articles, which is a tentative beginning of a research to include more articles, points to the following preliminary conclusions. Both the US and Romanian articles resort to metaphors, mainly of an ontological type. The variety of domain sources appears to be slightly wider in the US as compared to the Romanian articles but there are many common ones, the most obvious being countries are people that enter various types of relations. However, the source domains are used with

[87] Su, "At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S."
[88] Su, "At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S."
[89] Su, "At Annual Political Meetings, China Lays out Its Plan to Surpass the U.S."
[90] Historia ro, "Dezbatere Historia Live, ora 12.00: Dialog furios SUA-China. Ce va urma?."

different intensity for the same target – more war-related metaphor and race metaphors are used in the US articles. The differences in terms of frequency and source types may be accounted for by the importance of these relations for the USA and Romania as well as by the cultural influences.

Both types of articles resort to more diversified metaphors (international relationships are described by means of people, crafts and science and fewer multivalent ones (for instance personification for countries and companies). In both types of articles metaphors are mainly complex ones – for example personification and war, physics and aggression, which lend metaphors a more memorable character.

In both types of articles, the most frequently resorted to metaphorical system is the Great Chain Metaphor, including source domains such as people, human body, technology and buildings and more references to the Event Structure Metaphor in the US ones.

The analysis proves that metaphors do have an ideological character, as the negative connotations generally associated with many source domains used to describe China indicate. The study also points to the existence of cultural differences – for example when mythology is used as a source domain, the US articles resort to ancient mythology while the Romanian ones to fairy-tales. This difference indicates a possible direction for further research.

In conclusion, this analysis represents a beginning of a more ample investigation of metaphors in journalistic style, the preliminary conclusions presented above indicating possible future directions.

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The New Biden Administration's Policies and Priorities in the Middle East

RALUCA MOLDOVAN

Introductory considerations: Enduring strategic American foreign policy interests in the Middle East and the new Biden administration

Every American presidential administration since the end of World War II (and even before, if we think about the overtures that president F. D. Roosevelt made to Saudi king Abdul Aziz ibn Saud in February 1945, while the conflict was still in full swing) has been preoccupied, to varying degrees, with Middle Eastern issues to the point where the region has become a quasi-staple of post-war American foreign policy. While during the Cold War, the US was mainly concerned about countries in the region falling under the influence of the Soviet Union and securing the existence of the Israeli state, after 1990, it adopted a more or less hegemonic position (favored by the emergence of a brief unipolar world following the fall of the URSS), boosted by a system of alliances primarily with the Jewish state and the Gulf monarchies, particularly Saudi Arabia, in order to counterbalance the rise of Iran and undercut its support for the so-called Shia crescent (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen). However, the 2003 American intervention in Iraq and its bloody aftermath, marked by the rise of sectarianism and terrorist organizations such as ISIS, somehow tarnished the US's reputation in the region and led to a resurgence of anti-American sentiments across the Middle East, which resulted in a gradual American withdrawal from the region, especially during Obama's second term, when it became clear that the Middle East was no longer a priority of American foreign policy. The US's role as regional stabilizer capable of mitigating conflicts in the area diminished after the outbreak of the Arab spring uprisings and the onset of the Syrian civil war during which president Obama failed to enforce his own

announced "red line" crossed by the Assad regime when the Syrian dictator used chemical gas against the civilian population in 2013.[1]

At the time, the US gave a clear signal that it was no longer willing to play the role of sole security provider in the Middle East and took a few steps back to create a vacuum all too readily and willingly filled by an opportunistic Russia and a long-term planning strategic China.[2] However, this does not mean that the US has become a peripheral actor in the region, a fact proven by the rather central role it played in American foreign policy during the administration of president Donald Trump, although, admittedly, this was rather more due to personal affinities between Trump and leaders such as Israeli prime minister Netanyahu or Saudi crown prince Mohamed bin Salman than to strategic calculations. The American military assets in the region still represent a considerable presence, yet Washington seems to have lost the political will to project its power unilaterally and reserves its military capabilities for striking at terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State, rather than against states upholding values the US opposes, as was the case, for instance, during the presidency of George W. Bush. Russia has capitalized on America's hesitation starting with the mid-2010s and, in addition to maintaining close ties with traditional allies such as Syria, has revived diplomatic contacts with Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf monarchies, while China has cultivated both Saudi Arabia and Iran in an attempt to ensure that its energy needs are met.[3] The slow and inexorable US withdrawal from the Persian Gulf region is symptomatic of a structural shift in the global balance of power rather than an indication of particular preferences that one presidential administration or another might have, considering that the original pillars of the relationship between Washington

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1 James L. Gelvin, "Introduction: A New Middle East"?, in *The Contemporary Middle East in an Age of Upheaval*, ed. James L. Gelvin (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 16.

2 Neil Quilliam, "The Role of External Powers: Global Actors (Part 1)," in *The New Regional Order in the Middle East. Changes and Challenges*, ed. Sara Bazoobandi (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 94.

3 While Russia's ambitions and interests are more evident, Beijing has been more quietly exploring its options so far, seeking to take advantage of the instability left in the wake of the US's decreased involvement in Syria, Yemen and Libya.

and the Gulf states, security and energy, no longer matter in the transactional manner in which they once did[4] and the ties between agencies, institutions and people might not be enough to ensure the longevity of these ties. During Obama's two terms, the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE became increasingly concerned that the US's pivot to Asia, coupled with the pursuit of a nuclear deal with Iran, the unwillingness to support Hosni Mubarak's regime in Cairo during the Arab Spring revolts, and the failure to keep Bashar al-Assad in check, signaled Washington's desire to abandon these states to fend for themselves in matters of security.[5] Despite the hopes generated by Trump's election that the US would continue to be a staunch security provider for the Gulf monarchies and his refusal to recertify the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, his decision to withdraw remaining American troops from Syria, implicitly endorsing a Russian-led solution to the conflict, hinted at the fact that Washington actually expected its allies to shoulder the regional security burden.[6]

The first six months of the new Biden administration have shown a fairly clear tendency to de-prioritize the Middle East in favor of other explicitly announced intentions of rebuilding ties with America's European allies and confronting Russia and China. Nevertheless, there are still many US national interests still at stake in the region, at least four of which have been foreign policy fixtures since the start of the Cold War. One has to do with maintaining a steady supply of oil from the Persian Gulf – even though the US is the current global leading producer, it does not mean it is invulnerable to fluctuations or disruptions in production or price, many of which tend to originate in the Middle East. The others also date back to the aftermath of World War II: the need to prevent the region from falling under the influence of a hostile power (be it the Soviet Union, Iran, ISIS or China); the desire to support American partners and allies (especially Israel) in a bid to boost the

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4 Quilliam, "The Role of External Powers," 95.

5 Obama made his dislike towards the Gulf states clear when, in an interview with The Atlantic, he called them "freeriders" and blamed them for their unwillingness to share the Gulf with Iran. See Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic,* April 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/.

6 Quilliam, "The Role of External Powers," 96.

country's global credibility and the search for regional stability by preventing regional wars.[7] One can also count nuclear non-proliferation, counter-terrorism and a commitment to democracy and human rights among often-invoked American foreign policy themes concerning the Middle East. Current US interests in the Middle East include as well the issue of defending sea lanes such as the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb and the Suez Canal, countering weapons of mass destruction and violent extremism stemming from terrorist organization such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, promoting good governance and democracy, and ending the forever wars in Afghanistan and Syria.[8]

The main obstacles confronting the US in achieving these interests, not only during the Biden administration, but likely in the near future as well, have to do with great power competitors, primarily China and Russia,[9] the rise of regional powers, especially Iran, and the fallout of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing these obstacles may very well require a delicate balancing act between the need to preserve US interests and Washington's desire to maintain a considerably smaller footprint in the region. A useful first step here would be to stay focused on the region as a whole, rather than cherry-picking allies and partners, and actively work to end existing civil wars (especially in Yemen and Syria) and prevent the outbreak of new ones, against the background of inevitable great power rivalry that should not cancel out the possibility for cooperation as well, as regional instability and the threat of spillover will ultimately have a global reach to which no state is immune. In this respect, successfully re-engaging

[7] Robert Lieber, "Biden, Iran and the Middle East: A Failure to Learn," Hoover Institution, June 15, 2021, https://www.hoover.org/research/biden-iran-and-middle-east-failure-learn. See also Mohammad Yaghi, "What Drives President Biden's Middle Eastern Policies," Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Policy Report no. 22, May 2021, 1.

[8] Paul Salem, Gerald Feierstein, Ross Harrison, "Foreword: Strategic Considerations for Middle East Policy," in *The Biden Administration and the Middle East: Policy Recommendations for a Sustainable Way Forward*, The Middle East Institute, March 2021, 7.

[9] China's Belt and Road Initiative includes a maritime link through the Red Sea with ties to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, as well as a land corridor running through Iran and Turkey en route to Europe. In addition, Beijing is now Abu Dhabi's leading trading partner. For its part, Russia works closely with Saudi Arabia in securing the OPEC+ agreement to stabilize oil prices. Both China and Russia are eager to break into the regional arms market, while 5G networks across the Middle East will be built around China's Huawei technology. (Salem, Feierstein, Harrison, "Foreword," 7).

with Iran could be a significant breakthrough, as it would lower the risk of regional instability, given that the Islamic Republic is currently involved in fueling several civil wars and enabling major terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah.[10]

Joe Biden campaigned on a platform to restore America's global role and to renew and strengthen the US's alliances and expectations about his administration's foreign policy were bolstered both by his long experience serving in the Senate and in the White House as vice-president, as well as by his skilled foreign policy team led by secretary of state Anthony Blinken. Biden has pragmatically praised the Abraham Accords between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain signed during his predecessor's administration and has not reversed the relocation of the US embassy back to Tel Aviv, but has made it a priority to revive the Iran nuclear deal by renegotiating the terms of the agreement and getting Iran to halt its uranium-enriching program, seeing this as a top goal of his foreign policy.[11] However, Biden's overall Middle Eastern strategy has been to reduce the US's defense policy commitments in the region, seen as a drain on American military and economic resources, in order to focus on confronting Russia and China globally.[12] In a sense, this strategy is a continuation of Obama's foreign policy towards the Middle East, when the region was de-prioritized in favor of the Asian pivot. Moreover, Biden also needs to content with various factions within his own Democratic Party, whose progressive faction has been quite vocal against American support for Israel as long as the Jewish state

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[10] Paul Salem, "US General Middle East Interests and Policy Priorities," in *The Biden Administration and the Middle East*, 12.

[11] William B. Quandt, "What to Expect from Biden in the Middle East," *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, February 24, 2021, https://www.thecairoreview.com/tahrir-forum/what-to-expect-from-biden-in-the-middle-east/.

[12] Lieber, "Biden, Iran and the Middle East." This confrontation with Russia and China has already been affected by how the Biden administration approaches the issue of agency: i.e., by projecting their own assumptions and beliefs onto others, they suppose that foreign leaders would respond to US policies the same way America would, rather than based on their own histories, ideologies, regime interests and personal experiences in a way reminiscent of what Hans Morgenthau described as "strategic narcissism." See Hans Morgenthau and Ethel Person, "The Roots of Narcissism," *Partisan Review*, 43, no. 3 (1978): 337-47.

continues its policy of settlements and annexation in the West Bank, as well as against military involvement in the Middle East as a whole.[13] The latter aspect will directly impact the Gulf states, who are no longer in a position to rely solely on the US for security guarantees (despite still having multi-billion dollar arms purchasing agreements with American companies) and have already started looking elsewhere, which explains their rapprochement with China.[14] On the other hand, this apparent American disengagement also means that the remaining states that have not done so are no longer under any pressure to normalize ties with Israel. Additionally, all signs indicate that solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a priority for the Biden administration – at least not for the foreseeable future, as the US president would prefer to build on the existing Abraham Accords to move the peace process along rather than intervening directly.

The first seven months of the Biden administration have raised some lingering concerns about the US as a reliable partner in the Middle East, which have already been exploited by Russia and China's expanded regional presence in an area in the midst of an internal transformation that makes it more resistant than before to outside forces trying to bring about political outcomes.[15] Thus, the present chapter seeks to analyze the Biden's administration foreign policy towards the Middle East, as it has been outlined in its first seven months, by looking at ties with Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia in particular, in order to discern whether we can speak of a radical departure from the previous administrations, or merely a continuation of Obama-era policies through different means. Of course, my assessment will necessarily be incomplete, as it takes place at the start of a new presidential term, so any long-term predictions should be approached with caution, especially considering that the region is facing many chronic problems that may have a great impact on global developments for decades to come, from human security to climate change that will bring increased

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13 Yaghi, "Biden's Middle Eastern Policy," 4.
14 Yaghi, "Biden's Middle Eastern Policy," 7.
15 Salem, Feierstein, Harrison, "Foreword," 6.

desertification, to high rates of poverty and a deep democratic and human rights deficit.

The Biden administration and the Middle East: seven months on

In his long political career serving in the Senate and then as Obama's vice-president, Joe Biden has developed a somewhat tortured relationship with the Middle East,[16] which might partially explain why he decided not to make the region a priority of his foreign policy – at least for the time being. All the early not-so-subtle signs point to a de-prioritization of the Middle East: it took him three weeks after taking office to call the Israeli prime minister Netanyahu (after having called many European heads of state and even adversaries like Russia and China), he announced an end to the support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, accompanied by a freeze on some arms sales to the region after two weeks in office,[17] and took almost a month to respond to deadly rocket attack in northern Iraq, which occurred in February 2021, when three rockets struck an Erbil air base hosting US forces, killing one non-US contractor and injuring five Americans.[18] The attack was claimed by a Shia militia group with known ties to Tehran. The response of the Biden administration came at the end of February 2021, in a first high-profile move, when the Department of Defense launched airstrikes against an Iranian-backed Shia militia group based in Syria, which killed at least 22 members of the Hezbollah Brigades as they transferred weapons from Iraq into Syria.[19]

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[16] He voted against the 1991 Gulf War, and as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, he pushed for Congress to authorize the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In 2007, while running for the Democratic nomination, he proposed a partition plan that would divide Iraq into three semi-autonomous regions controlled by Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims and Kurds, a proposal widely panned by scholars and foreign policy analysts.

[17] Sharaddha Bhandari, "US Foreign Policy and Its Middle East Conundrum," March 1, 2021, https://www.wionews.com/opinions-blogs/opinion-us-foreign-policy-and-its-middle-east-conundrum-367054.

[18] Elise Labott, "Can Biden Finally Put the Middle East in Check and Pivot Already," *Foreign Policy*, March 2, 2021, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/02/biden-middle-east-china-pivot-clinton-obama/.

[19] Emad Mekay, "Biden and the Middle East," International Bar Association, April 7, 2021, https://www.ibanet.org/article/349234ED-73D2-4BF1-A4EE-32741DAF8D1A. Jennifer Rubin, "Biden's Middle East Policy Is One and a Half Steps Forward, but Not Enough," *Washington*

The strikes were carefully calibrated to avoid a more direct attack on Tehran, which could further provoke the leadership of the Islamic Republic. This move sent a clear message to Tehran that the US would try to contain Iran's growing ideological reach in the region and that its policy of creating proxies in Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Iraq would be met with force when the situation calls for it. This also showed that, despite ongoing negotiations to revive the nuclear deal, the US would not give in to military pressure to lift the sanctions against Iran before any meaningful progress on the terms of the deal has been achieved and that Iran cannot affect the result of the negotiations through destabilizing behavior.

According to sources from inside the Biden administration, the Middle East is not even in the top three foreign policy priorities, as president Biden is keen to avoid the US being dragged into a Middle Eastern quagmire (as many of his predecessors, have been) while engaged in a great power competition with Russia and China.[20] Additionally, Biden announced the withdrawal of all American troops from Afghanistan to be completed by September 11, 2021 – a move which, partially completed at the time of writing (August 2021) has led to the resurgence of Taliban power and their occupation of half the country. This has been hailed as a major victory for the global jihadist movement and might give it increased energy and recruiting power,[21] which might well complicate things in the Middle East too, spearheading a resurgence in ISIS or Al-Qaeda terrorist acts, especially in Syria, where president Biden has given no indication of a deeper American involvement after Trump's 2019 decision to pull all American troops out. If there is one lesson to be learned from here, should such events occur, is that what happens in Syria rarely stays in Syria and tends to spill over all across the region.

Post, February 28, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/02/28/biden-middle-east-policy-one-half-steps-forward-not-enough/.

[20] Natasha Bertrand, Laura Seligman, "Biden Deprioritizes the Middle East," *Politico*, February 22, 2021, https://www.politico.com/news/2021/02/22/biden-middle-east-foreign-policy-470589. See also Yossi Kuperwasser, "President Biden's Middle East Policy," *Fathom*, April 2021, https://fathomjournal.org/president-bidens-middle-east-policy/.

[21] Paul Salem, "The Biden Administration and the Middle East: Reflecting on the First 100 Days," Middle East Institute, April 28, 2021, https://www.mei.edu/publications/biden-administration-and-middle-east-reflecting-first-100-days.

Biden also indicated that he will continue to support the diplomatic breakthrough of his predecessor Donald Trump, i.e., the Abraham Accords, while at the same time replacing his transactional foreign policy with economic engagement, diplomacy and countering authoritarianism,[22] but the early critical test of his administration is whether they will be able to renegotiate the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, announced as a "critical priority" by the State Department.[23] Despite several rounds of indirect negotiations conducted in Vienna in the first six months of 2021, very little progress has been made towards a new nuclear deal, as I will explain in the following section of the present chapter.

Yemen was among the first focus areas of the new administration, with president Biden appointing a special envoy, Timothy Lenderking, charged with negotiating a lasting cease-fire between the Houthi rebels and the forces of the Saudi-led coalition and propose an acceptable peace plan. Biden also pushed for more humanitarian aid to reach the war-torn country and reversed the Trump administration's designation of the Houthis as a terrorist group, in order to facilitate a negotiated cease-fire. These measures, though modest at face value, have already yielded results: in March 2021, Riyadh announced a significant shift in the form of a new peace plan aimed at stabilizing Yemen and rebuilding the country by integrating it into the economic sphere of its much richer Gulf neighbors.[24]

Biden has continued his reversal of Trump-era policies, marking his intention to carry out a "de-Trumpization"[25] of US foreign policy, by

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22 Mekay, "Biden and the Middle East." Under Trump's administration, oil and weapons sales played a central role, while the rich Gulf states felt emboldened to go on military adventures in Libya and Yemen and to engage in human rights violations, knowing they will have to face little international pressure.

23 Bertrand, Seligman, "Biden Deprioritizes the Middle East."

24 Mekay, "Biden and the Middle East"; Fatima Abo Alasrar, "The Biden Administration and the Middle East: Reflecting on the First 100 Days," Middle East Institute, April 28, 2021, https://www.mei.edu/publications/biden-administration-and-middle-east-reflecting-first-100-days. The Houthis seemed much less receptive to the Saudi initiative, as they intensified their military campaign in the oil-rich Marib province and their attacks within Saudi Arabia.

25 Muhittin Ataman, "Biden's Policy towards the Middle East," *Daily Sabbah*, February 24, 2021, https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/columns/bidens-policy-toward-the-middle-east; Quandt, "What to Expect from Biden in the Middle East."

restoring the financial assistance programs for the UNRWA,[26] the UN agency that serves almost 6 million Palestinian refugees and resumed contact with the Palestinian Authority, and announcing that the US still endorses a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which would lead to the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. And, in yet another departure from his predecessor, president Biden spoke in no uncertain terms about upholding human rights and accountability abroad, including in countries like the US's long-standing ally, Saudi Arabia.[27] He authorized the release of a much-anticipated CIA report on the murder of Saudi US-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi, which blamed a number of minor Saudi officials working under orders from crown prince Mohamed bin Salman (MBS) himself.[28] The assassination of the *Washington Post* journalist has been described by some observers as the most serious crisis in US-Saudi relations since 9/11.[29] Although MBS is directly named responsible in the report, the Biden administration stopped short of imposing sanctions on him too, in addition to the 75 Saudi citizens named in the document, most likely in a bid not to antagonize what is still a significant strategic ally by adopting a radical punitive stance against the heir to the Saudi throne, whom Biden has so far nonetheless bypassed, preferring to talk directly to his father, the aging king Salman ibn Saud.[30] However, MBS remains the heir to the throne of the most important Sunni nation and he will not be easily sidestepped. Washington still needs Saudi Arabia on its side in order to contain Iran, and Riyadh is still the most powerful voice within OPEC, which plays a central role in the stability of the global energy market, even though the US's need for Saudi oil has certainly diminished in recent years. This American restraint shows the enduring value of strategic calculations, despite the fact that president Biden has repeatedly expressed

[26] *The Economist*, "Joe's Modest Middle East Medicine," May 22, 2021, https://www.economist.com/united-states/2021/05/22/joes-modest-middle-east-medicine.

[27] Rubin, "Biden's Middle East Policy."

[28] Julie Norman, "Middle East Balance Key to Biden's Foreign Policy Aims," April 26, 2021, https://americas.chathamhouse.org/article/middle-east-balance-biden-foreign-policy/.

[29] Mekay, "Biden and the Middle East."

[30] Ataman, "Biden's Policy"; Labott, "Can Biden Pivot?."

with frustration with Saudi Arabia, which back in 2019 he called a "a pariah state with no redeeming value."[31]

While the US will continue to act as a security guarantor for Israel, Biden made it clear at the start of his term that he would not offer a blank check to prime minister Netanyahu. Meanwhile, following the April 2021 Israeli elections, the fourth general election in two years, Netanyahu, after presiding over yet another short war with the Gaza-based Hamas, the worst outbreak of violence since 2014, (which will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section), proved unable to form a new government and was replaced by right-wing nationalist Naftali Bennett. Given that Bennett has only been in office a short while at the time of writing, it is still too soon to tell whether he will enjoy a better rapport with president Biden. What is clear, however, is that US support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has remained at a purely rhetorical level, with no concrete measures being adopted to signal the administration's genuine commitment to bringing about this long-mentioned solution.[32] As I have mentioned before, so far president Biden has reversed neither Trump's decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem nor the latter's recognition of the Golan Heights as Israeli territory.[33] However, he has made it clear that the so-called Peace to Prosperity peace plan (also dubbed "the deal of the century") will not be his point of departure if the US should embark on another attempt to mediate a peace between the conflicting parties.[34]

So far, Biden's Middle Eastern approach has represented not only a departure from or a reversal of most of the foreign policy decisions made by his White House predecessor, but also a break with some of president Obama's more dovish policies, by adopting a tougher stance in dealing with

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[31] *The Economist*, "What Should Joe Biden Do in the Middle East?", March 4, 2021, https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/03/06/what-should-joe-biden-do-in-the-middle-east.

[32] Kuperwasser, "President Biden's Middle East Policy."

[33] Alvaro Escalonilla, "Challenges for the Biden Administration in the Middle East," *Atalayar*, February 12, 2021, https://atalayar.com/en/content/challenges-biden-administration-middle-east; Kuperwasser, "President Biden's Middle East Policy."

[34] Quandt, "What to Expect from Biden in the Middle East."

troublesome states (particularly Saudi Arabia and Iran) than the latter was willing to.[35] Case in point here are the strikes against the Iran-backed Shia militia in Syria, executed in collaboration with the Iraqi government and a joint team of intelligence officials, as well as the refusal to keep backing the Saudi coalition in Yemen and engage in massive weapons sales – something that the Obama administration, despite protests against human rights violations and violence against civilians, never ceased to do. This kind of behavior stands in sharp contrast with Trump's January 2020 decision to assassinate Iranian general Qassim Soleimani in Iraq, which was made unilaterally with no warning to Baghdad, violating the country's sovereignty.[36] Overall, Biden envisages an institutional foreign policy with considerably fewer fluctuations and surprises than during Trump's term in office, by promising a return to multilateralism and the restoration of US leadership in a way that has made many experts to speculate that we might be witnessing something akin to Obama's "third term" in office.[37] Looking at the big picture, however, the Middle East, at least for the time being, appears to be somewhat of a side show in the greater great power rivalry between the US, on the one hand, and Russia and China, on the other, considering that many countries in the region are currently targeted either by China's economic ambitions or Russia's military and diplomatic overtures.[38] What the new administration also needs to account and prepare for is the fact that several leaders is the region have been in power for quite some time and, given their age (King Salman of Saudi Arabia being the prime example in this respect), some change in leadership is not unlikely in the near future:[39] the PA's Mahmoud Abbas, king Salman and Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei might all be replaced sooner rather than later, with one of the

[35] Ben Rich, "Biden Is Already Carving out a Different Middle Eastern Policy from Trump – and Even Obama," *The Conversation*, March 3, 2021, https://theconversation.com/biden-is-already-carving-out-a-different-middle-east-policy-from-trump-and-even-obama-156206; Norman, "Middle East Balance."

[36] Rich, "Biden Is Already Carving out."

[37] Escalonilla, "Challenges for the Biden Administration"; Kuperwasser, "President Biden's Middle East Policy."

[38] Kuperwasser, "President Biden's Middle East Policy."

[39] Quandt, "What to Expect from Biden in the Middle East."

Middle East's most enduring leaders, Benjamin Netanyahu, having been already forced to relinquish his grip on power after 12 years in office.

Even after a mere seven months in office, and without having announced a grand master plan for the Middle East, several experts on the area have noticed the existence of a "Biden effect" on major regional powers, consisting in a renewed push towards political normalization, a process started even before Biden took office, when it became clear that Trump was not going to be re-elected for a second term.[40] There are four visible indicators of change that president Biden could use to recalibrate his "do-no-harm" approach and pursue a more assertive path: first, Saudi Arabia and Iran have been engaged in secret talks since January 2021 brokered by Iraq, to manage their long-standing conflict; second, Turkey is trying to reduce tensions with Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Israel; third, building on the Abraham Accords, Israel and the UAE have started open free-trade talks; finally, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq are engaged in trilateral talks to deepen their economic ties.[41] Given these developments – admittedly, without knowing whether they will be turned to account or how long they would last – the US might have an historic opportunity to engage to support these fragile processes, all the while never losing sight of one crucial detail: the stability of the Middle East is overwhelmingly due to local circumstances, not American action.[42] In other words, a dose of humility in American foreign policy is a much-needed quality, and one that the US has often disregarded,[43] as Washington has often fatally assumed it was in charge of the situation even when the tide of events turned against it: if president Biden is serious

[40] Murat Sofuoglu, "Could Biden Be Why Relations Have Improved between Middle Eastern Powers," *TRT World*, May 12, 2021, https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/could-biden-be-why-relations-have-improved-between-middle-eastern-powers-46643. However, I do believe that this changed state of affairs is more due to Trump's exit (particularly if one thinks of Saudi Arabia) than to Biden's arrival" in loc de "However, I do believe that this changed state of affairs is more due to Trump's exit (particularly if one thinks of Saudi Arabia) than with Biden's arrival.

[41] Frederick Kempe, "Four Mideast Signs of Change Offer Historic Opportunity. Here's How Biden Can Build on Them," *Atlantic Council*, May 9, 2021, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/inflection-points/middle-east-signs-change-opportunity-biden/.

[42] *The Economist*, "Joe's Modest Middle East Medicine."

[43] John C. Hulsman, "The Biden Administration, the Middle East and the Lost Art of Humility in Foreign Policy Making," *Aspenia Online*, May 20, 2021, https://aspeniaonline.it/the-biden-administration-the-middle-east-and-the-lost-art-of-humility-in-foreign-policymaking/.

about de-prioritizing the Middle East and leaving a light footprint in the region, he must remember that he cannot have it both ways: he cannot formulate or impose directions for other countries without committing to the staying power to make such measures stick.

The new Biden administration and Iran:
Pursuing the renewal of the nuclear deal

During his tenure as vice-president in the Obama administration, Joe Biden was actively involved in the thorny negotiations leading to the signing of the JCPOA in July 2015 between the PS+1 (Germany), a nuclear deal designed to lift some of the harshest sanctions against Iran in exchange for the Islamic Republic's commitment not to pursue the fabrication of nuclear weapons and to allow IAEA inspections of its nuclear facilities. The deal was always controversial in the US, which is Obama refused to submit it to Congressional approval as a formal treaty.[44] Based on these inspections and on Iran's compliance with the terms of the agreement, US presidents were supposed to periodically recertify the deal, confirming that Iran abode by the JCPOA provisions. In July 2018, president Trump, fulfilling one of his campaign promises, refused to certify the agreement, arguing that Iran was in violation of the deal terms (although the other signatories disagreed) and reimposed sanctions, which predictably resulted in Tehran resuming its uranium enrichment program to weapons grade level.

As discussed in the previous sections, although the Middle East as a whole has not featured high on the US's foreign policy agenda since January 2021, renegotiating the Iran nuclear deal has been cited as a critical priority of the Biden administration. In this respect, indirect negotiations via shuttle diplomacy have been conducted in Vienna starting in March 2021,[45] with sixth rounds going by without any tangible results (the last one ending just before the Iranian presidential elections on June 18), hopes being rather dim

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[44] Lieber, "Biden, Iran and the Middle East."

[45] Biden's choice for head of the US negotiating team has raised a few eyebrows, as Robert Malley has been described as one of "Tehran's premier apologists in Washington" (see Bret Stephens, "Dissidents First: A Foreign Policy Doctrine for the Biden Administration," *New York Times*, January 26, 2021).

that a new deal agreeable to all parties could be reached – especially considering the change in leadership in Tehran after the elections in which the moderate Hassan Rouhani was voted out of office and replaced with the hardliner Ebrahim Raisi, the conservative chief of the Iranian judiciary. Iran insists on all sanctions (not just the non-nuclear ones, but also those imposed on the grounds of terrorism and missile development) being lifted before it can commit to any reduction of its uranium-enrichment program, something that Washington cannot risk without certainly incurring the wrath of allies such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, and even criticism from some of its European partners. Given the slim chances of reviving the JCPOA, at least in the foreseeable future, perhaps the Biden administration should look for alternative solutions rather than insisting on returning to a deal that was flawed in the first place, as it contained a number of loopholes Iran could speculate to its advantage. The defects of the deal might not fixable through bona fide negotiations and Tehran might well resist attempts to force it to adopt a different attitude towards its regional adversaries.[46]

Iran has already tried to influence the result of the negotiations through force by sponsoring a terrorist attack against coalition forces in Iraq in February 2021, which prompted the US president to order strikes against Syrian Shia militias with known ties to Tehran, as I have already discussed in the second section of this chapter.[47] As things stand, however, by not giving in to Iranian pressure and maintaining the sanctions that have already caused untold damage to the Iranian economy, president Biden has a golden opportunity to force Iran into a new deal that would eliminate the deficiencies of the JCPOA, i.e., lifting the limits on its nuclear activity after 2030.[48] Iran would much rather go back to the terms of the 2015 deal, despite their procrastination and stubbornness manifested in Vienna, and is now conducting a policy of brinkmanship in attempt to perhaps force Biden's hand. So far, this policy has managed to put Israel on alert to the point where it has already allegedly orchestrated a targeted attack against Iranian nuclear

[46] Kuperwasser, "President Biden's Middle East Policy."

[47] BBC, "Biden Takes First Military Action with Syria Strike on Iran-Backed Militias," February 26, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-56205056.

[48] Kuperwasser, "President Biden's Middle East Policy."

facilities in Natanz earlier this year,[49] causing significant damage. The Israelis are also believed to be behind the assassination of Iran's leading nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, at the end of 2020.[50] The Iranian response has been to strike against a ship owned by an Israeli magnate, in July 2021, causing the death of two crew members, one British and one Romanian, leading to international condemnation of the Tehran regime.

Raisi's election will likely complicate things even further, given that one of his first statements as president-elect was to reiterate Iran's firm position of not giving in to American demands to halt its uranium enrichment program before any sanctions are lifted, because the US was the first to repudiate the deal[51] – all the more considering that Raisi himself is subject to US human rights penalties, to which the Biden administration intends to hold him accountable.[52] Certainly, Raisi is not the definitive voice on the matter, as any final decision will be made by Ayatollah Khamenei, but the current of opinion in Tehran at the moment is not favorable to revising the 2015 deal or negotiating new terms. The US would like to expand the terms of the original agreement to include ballistic missiles and Iran's support for regional proxies like Hamas and Hezbollah, something that Raisi has outrightly dismissed, which gave new impetus to critics of the deal who argue that the US has already given away too much in exchange for too little in its haste to reverse Trump's decision to decertify the JCPOA.[53] Biden, one of the architects of the 2015 deal, would clearly not like to walk away from it and prove the naysayers right, but he might be forced to admit his administration's efforts are doomed to fail because the Iranians cannot be trusted.[54] Additionally, the window of opportunity to act in order to secure

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49 Norman, "Middle East Balance."

50 Haleh Esfandiari, Robin Wright, David Ottaway, "What the MENA Region Expects from the Biden Administration," Wilson Centre, December 3, 2020, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/what-mena-region-expects-biden-administration.

51 Wilson Centre, "Joe Biden's Tough Challenges in Iran," January 13, 2021, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/joe-bidens-tough-challenges-iran.

52 Matthew Lee, "Iran's Election Unsettles Biden's Hope for a Nuclear Deal," *Associated Press*, June 22, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-joe-biden-middle-east-iran-government-and-politics-8d8f70767a80decd8a12eb0c54241ccf.

53 Lee, "Iran's Election."

54 Gabrielle Dembinski, "Joe Biden Feels the Middle East Heat," *GZERO Media*, February 18, 2021, https://www.gzeromedia.com/joe-biden-feels-the-middle-east-heat#toggle-gdpr.

a renegotiated deal might be closing, on account of the 400 billion dollar deal recently concluded between Iran and China, which might make the Tehran regime somewhat less vulnerable to US sanctions, some of which – such as those against the Central Bank of Iran, fall under the terrorism label, rather than under issues linked to nuclear compliance. A pro-China hardline faction has gained some ground In Tehran and they are trying to drive a hard bargain with the Biden administration, while China has gained currency as some sort of strategic balancer in the region by providing support to Shia groups in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.[55]

If, at the moment, Iran might still regard the JCPOA as its best chance to return to some normalcy on the international stage, its growing rapprochement with China could make the new Tehran regime less susceptible to American pressure to curb its nuclear ambitions, especially taking into account the fact that Iran has so far steadfastly resisted any attempt to broaden the original deal to include its ballistic missile program or its proxy network, something unlikely to change in the future.[56] And since Joe Biden has so far dismissed revisiting Trump's "maximum pressure" policy on Iran, the 2015 nuclear deal stands a better chance of being abandoned altogether rather than revived.

Recalibrating the US-Saudi Arabia relationship at the start of Joe Biden's term

The Gulf monarchies, including Saudi Arabia, have long been dependent upon the US for their security and especially for the enduring nature of their ruling families, some of whom were threatened with being overthrown during the Arab Spring. the US continues to station its 5th fleet in Bahrain, 380th Air Expeditionary Wing at Al Dhafra Air Base in UAE and has deployed additional US military personnel in Oman, the UAE and

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[55] Bhandari, "US Foreign Policy."

[56] Alex Vatanka, "The Biden Administration and the Middle East: Reflecting on the First 100 Days," Middle East Institute, April 28, 2021, https://www.mei.edu/publications/biden-administration-and-middle-east-reflecting-first-100-days; Michael Knights, "Biden Wants to Leave the Middle East, but He's in a Vicious Bombing Cycle in Iraq," *Politico*, February 7, 2021, https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/07/02/biden-iraq-bombing-vicious-cycle-497699.

Kuwait. The US Combined Air and Space Operations Centre, based in Al Udeid, south west of the capital Doha, represents a key asset enabling the US to project its military power in the whole region. US–Qatar military cooperation is based on a long-term agreement, renewed for another 10 years in December 2013. This committed the US to continue operating the base and maintaining troops there until at least 2024. Indeed, the US military presence in Qatar was likely a determining factor, which dissuaded Saudi Arabia and the UAE from taking military action against Doha in June 2017.[57] This fact shows that the ties binding the US and the Gulf monarchies are still viable, despite Obama's pivot to Asia and the signals already sent by the Biden administration that the cozy relationship between Washington and Riyadh, developed during Trump's term in office, is over. Saudi Arabia remains the linchpin of global oil production and is essential for maintaining stability in world energy markets.[58]

As previously mentioned, Biden sanctioned the release of the damning CIA report into the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi earlier in 2021, in which the Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman is named as the prime instigator. The report, however, stopped short of imposing sanctions on MBS himself[59] and, at the start of July 2021, the Biden administration rolled out the red carpet for the visit of the crown prince's younger brother, deputy defense minister prince Khalid bin Salman, the highest level Saudi visit to Washington since Khashoggi's murder in October 2018.[60] The Saudi guest met with the secretary of state, the national security advisor, the defense secretary and the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, which indicates the importance the US still places on its alliance with Riyadh, even though there was no prior announcement of the visit or the prince's itinerary. After all, the US still relies on Saudi Arabia to balance against Iran and facilitate counter-terrorism operations,[61] so perhaps the recalibration that Biden is seeking might not go very deep.

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[57] Quilliam, "The Role of External Powers," 97.

[58] Gerald Feierstein, "Saudi Arabia," in *The Biden Administration and the Middle East*, 37.

[59] Rubin, "Biden's Middle East Policy."

[60] Frank Gardner, "Khashoggi Murder: US Softens Towards Saudi Leader," BBC, July 14, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-57760786.

[61] Norman, "Middle East Balance."

Additionally, the US president also put an end to the American support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, which means that the Saudi and UAE troops fighting the Houthi rebels are now without air-fueling support for their bombing sorties.[62] All these might make the Saudi and UAE leaders wonder how much they can still depend on US security guarantees and whether it might time to look elsewhere (for instance, towards Beijing)[63] for new partners. Both China and the Gulf monarchies enjoy one notable advantage that countries such as the US do not: the luxury of long-term planning, knowing that the possibilities of regime change are slim, since their leaders cannot be voted out of office. There are a number of signs that both nations are willing to take on a greater regional role even without the blessing of the US,[64] and China will be all too happy to step into the vacuum created by the even partial withdrawal of the US from the area – but it remains to be seen whether Beijing is also willing to shoulder the responsibility for regional security as well.

Another point of contention between Riyadh and Washington is Biden's push for the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, to which Saudi Arabia was bitterly opposed when it was signed six years ago. Iran conducted some air strikes against Saudi oil facilities, causing significant damage, in 2019, so the kingdom is wary of what Tehran might be capable of. Depending on the outcome of the Vienna negotiations, the relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia might suffer a few changes, especially if a deal is reached and the sanctions imposed on the Iranian economy are lifted. If the terms of the original deal remain in place, even with limits imposed on

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[62] Nevertheless, this decision was accompanied by a promise to uphold the long-standing US-Saudi defense relationship, at least on a rhetorical level. Joe Biden also announced the end of offensive arms sales to Saudi Arabia, stating that only defensive weapons will be sold from now on, although where the line is drawn is unclear. See Gerald Feierstein, "The Biden Administration and the Middle East: Reflecting on the First 100 Days," Middle East Institute, April 28, 2021, https://www.mei.edu/publications/biden-administration-and-middle-east-reflecting-first-100-days.

[63] In 2018, president Xi Jinping pledged 20 billion USD in loans to Arab countries. In China's worldview, economic development is the means for reducing conflict and promoting stabilization. Currently, China imports 49% of its crude oil and 21% of oil products from the region; whilst 37% of the region's oil exports are destined for China, amounting to nearly $123 billion in 2016; imports from the region are valued at $87.5 billion.

[64] Quilliam, "The Role of External Powers," 105.

its production of enriched uranium, Iran will still be free to pursue its nuclear ambitions after 2030, which is enough to cause quite a few headaches in Riyadh and make it more reliant on US security guarantees – unless China, which is also pursuing ties with Iran, is willing to step in.

Joe Biden, speaking as a candidate in 2020, made it clear that for him, Saudi Arabia was responsible for many human rights violations and, once elected, has preferred to deal with king Salman directly,[65] bypassing the crown prince. However, given that the Saudi king is already rather old (85 years of age) and ailing, he might be forced to deal exclusively with MBS sooner rather than later and would prefer not to definitively antagonize the prince. What the US could do, in the near future, is use its considerable leverage power to secure the release of prisoners of conscience still lingering in Saudi jails, ensure that no new arrests are made from among the regime's critics and demand human rights improvements within the kingdom. After all, while a rapprochement to China could be tempting for Riyadh, it might not be worth dismissing decades of close partnership with the US for what may ultimately turn out to be a marriage of convenience on Beijing's part.

Israel and the US: a new start after the Netanyahu era?

In March 2021, Israel went through the fourth general election in two years – an unprecedented fact in any consolidated democracy. While the leader of the Likud Party and the country's longest serving prime minister (with 12 years in office), Benjamin Netanyahu, was hoping to retain his office, he was finally ousted by a motley coalition that brought together centrist leftists, ultranationalists, and the Arab Joint League united by little more than the desire to end Netanyahu's long grip on power, which makes one doubtful about the staying power of this alliance. The coalition agreement was signed in June 2021, after Israel went through yet another short eleven-day war with Hamas, the worst such incident since 2014. What is somehow surprising was the restraint exercised by the Biden administration during the conflict: with the exception of an offer to support

[65] Dembinski, "Joe Biden Feels the Middle East Heat;" Hulsman, "The Biden Administration"; Feierstein, "Saudi Arabia," 37.

a ceasefire should the US be asked to do so, made by secretary of state Blinken,[66] Joe Biden made no official statement condemning either Israel or Hamas, pressing for a ceasefire or offering to mediate one.[67] This attitude is in keeping with the general attitude of the new administration towards the Israeli-Palestinian peace process: as I have highlighted earlier, with the exception of a few lukewarm statements expressing support for a two-state solution as outlined in the now severely outdated Oslo Process framework,[68] Joe Biden has given no indication that he is willing to broker negotiations between the two parties or to let the US become involved in any way in this matter. This shows that he does not consider it a priority, all the more considering how divided his own Democratic Party is on the issue of Israel: the progressive left wing of the party has been quite vocal in condemning Israel for retaliating against Hamas strikes and for continuing the policy of settlements in the West Bank, with representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez even calling Israel "an apartheid state."[69] Several other prominent Democrats have called on Biden to attach conditions to the 735$ shipment of precision-guided weaponry for Israel, a deal currently going through fast-track congressional approval, yet three quarters of the House members pledged not to impose any such conditions on US aid.

The president himself has had a rather complicated relationship with former prime minister Netanyahu, who not only promised to halt the construction of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem only to reverse his decision during Biden's official visit to the city in 2010, but also, in 2015, gave a speech before Congress, at the invitation of the Republican speaker, condemning Obama for signing the Iran nuclear deal (in which Biden played a significant role). It took Biden three weeks to call Netanyahu after taking

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[66] Stephen Collinson, "Why Biden Is Not Diving into Middle East Peace Brokering," CNN, May 18, 2021, https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/18/politics/middle-east-peace-joe-biden/index.html.

[67] In all likelihood, Biden's credibility would have been affected if he had pressed for a ceasefire only to have his calls ignored by both parties.

[68] Salem Barahmeh, "Biden Can't Free Palestine," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/20/biden-cant-free-palestine/; Haik Gugarats, "Crises Complicate Biden's Middle East Strategy," *Argus Media*, May 17, 2021, https://www.argusmedia.com/en/news/2215632-crises-complicate-bidens-middle-east-strategy.

[69] Collinson, "Why Biden Is Not Diving."

office,[70] long after he made such courtesy calls even to adversaries like Russia and China, signaling that the Israeli prime minister would be treated much differently than he was during the Trump administration. Netanyahu was quite outspoken against the US president's intention to revive the Iran nuclear deal earlier in 2021, since he regards the Islamic Republic as the key threat to Israel's security. Even though Netanyahu is no longer prime minister, it is highly doubtful that his successor, Naftali Bennett, regards the Vienna negotiations positively:[71] just because the prime minister has changed, it does not mean that Israel's security priorities have changed too, which is bound to create some tension in the future between Washington and Tel Aviv. Moreover, Bennett is a known supporter of the annexation of the West Bank, which might well spell trouble for the US-Israeli relationship in the near future – although this is a risky gamble, as it has the potential to break the governing coalition.

Certainly, while the US is trying to avoid getting dragged in the midst of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which would undoubtedly distract from Washington's top foreign policy priorities, it cannot neglect one of the its strategic regional allies with which it has enjoyed a special relationship for seven decades. Thus, several signs point to an increased American engagement with Israel: secretary of state Blinken's visit to the region in May 2021, the appointment of Michael Ratney, a veteran State Department diplomat, to head the US Embassy in Jerusalem until the vacant ambassador position is filled, and plans to reopen a consulate in Jerusalem to serve as contact point with the Palestinians, after the former office was merged with the Embassy after its relocation, prompting PA officials to refuse to do business there.[72] The latter measure seems to be part of Biden's strategy to

[70] David Gardner, "Joe Biden's Silent Treatment of the Middle East Prompts and Outbreak of Reason," *Financial Times*, February 17, 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/6cc43a18-ea1f-4742-a805-2272201847af.

[71] In fact, Bennett has expressed his opposition to the JCPOA, but has not turned it into an obsession, as was the case with Netanyahu and it is highly unlikely he will repeat the latter's 2015 attempt to defy the Obama administration by speaking directly to Congress, nor will he play the evangelical card to force the Biden administration's hand when it comes to renegotiating the Iran deal.

[72] Michael Crowley, Annie Karni, "After High-Wire Act, Biden Faces Tough New Middle East Tests," *The New York Times*, May 21, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/21/us/politics/biden-israel-diplomacy.html; *The Economist*, "Joe's Modest Middle East Medicine."

accommodate some Palestinian demands[73] without actually proposing a peace plan or engaging in mediation, alongside reversing Trump's decision to stop funding the UNRWA. For now, it appears this is the most that the Palestinians can hope for from the new administration. However, this American restraint might have some detrimental consequences down the road: by not exerting pressure on Israel and allowing it to continue its settlement expansion policy[74] to the point where the annexation of the West Bank becomes inevitable, the state might lose its ability to be both Jewish and democratic and transform into a genuine apartheid regime; on the other hand, by insisting on the need for Palestinian elections even though the PA decided to postpone them indefinitely, knowing that Hamas would have likely won, Washington implicitly will have to treat Hamas as a legitimate political actor, despite designating it as a terrorist organization.[75] A Hamas victory would also leave Israel without a negotiating partner that can credibly speak for all Palestinians.[76]

Since the new Israeli government headed by Bennett has only been in office for 2 months at the time of writing, it is premature to assess whether its relationship with Washington could mark the start of a new, post-Netanyahu era, although, unlike in Netanyahu's case, Biden wasted no time in calling the new Israeli PM and congratulating him on the very day he took office.[77] What can be stated with some measure of certainty, however, is that the special US-Israeli relationship will continue and endure, despite occasional tensions and disagreements and the president Biden, who once called a 3 billion USD aid package to Israel "the best investment America has ever made,"[78] will continue to support the Jewish state despite the fact that the two

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[73] Kuperwasser, "President Biden's Middle East Policy."

[74] Patsy Widakuswara, "Israeli-Palestinian Violence Draws Biden back to the Middle East," *VOA News*, May 12, 2021, https://www.voanews.com/usa/israeli-palestinian-violence-draws-biden-back-middle-east.

[75] Kuperwasser, "President Biden's Middle East Policy;" Ian Bremmer, "The Ceasefire between Israel and Hamas Shows How Little Control Biden Has over the Middle East," *Time*, May 23, 2021, https://time.com/6050609/ceasefire-israel-hamas-biden/.

[76] Bremmer, "Ceasefire."

[77] Aaron David Miller, "Israel's New Prime Minister Might Not Bring Positive Change," *USA Today*, June 25, 2021, https://eu.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2021/06/25/israels-new-prime-minister-might-not-bring-positive-change/7775972002/.

[78] Barahmeh, "Biden Can't Free Palestine."

countries' strategic priorities may not always coincide. However, what president Biden needs to keep in mind is that Israeli politics is rather volatile and Netanyahu, now the voice of the opposition, will continue pressing from the outside, while the Palestinians themselves will not sit still – so the present context might be just a brief respite from both Netanyahu and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Conclusions

Biden's first seven months in office reflect a Middle East policy distinct from both the bombastic rhetoric of Trump-era nationalism and the idealism of Obama-era globalism, being characterized by a restrained and pragmatic engagement with allies and adversaries in various parts of the region. The American presence in the Middle East is still trying to strike a balance between disengagement and preventing Russia and Chia from gaining too much of a foothold there. There are still many unknows that will affect how the US will relate to this troubled part of the world and Washington might yet again find itself called upon to become more involved: from a more assertive Chinese presence, drawing closer to Iran and Saudi Arabia, to growing instability in Israel brought on by a potential crisis within the governing coalition, or yet another confrontation with Hamas, or even a more direct conflict with Tehran, to increased terrorist activity on the part of ISIS or al-Qaeda affiliates, to an escalation of the Syrian civil war accompanied by a rising Russian presence, or a dramatic shift in the Yemeni conflict in favor of either the coalition or the Houthi rebels, the Middle East has no shortage of hot spots that could affect the stability of the entire international system and test America's resolve, credibility and leadership. Just a like a child who demands attention the moment a parent's face turns away, so the Middle East is certain to keep requiring Joe Biden's attention despite his decision to (temporarily) look away from it.

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A Global Digital Rulebook? Assessing the Potential for a Strategic Partnership between the US and the EU in Digital Policy

MIRELA MĂRCUȚ

Introduction

Despite lagging behind in innovation capacity and technological development, the European Union has set its eyes on becoming a global digital leader by engaging in the active regulation of the digital space. Recent events involving Big Tech have only fueled this commitment, so much so that the President of the Commission has started criticizing the very business models of these global companies, which have all originated in the United States.

With the change in American leadership, European leaders have also expressed interest in a renewed strategic partnership, more specifically for the establishment of a global rulebook for the digital space. This article aims to explore the avenues for a strategic partnership in digital policy between the two actors, based on the idea that the two have different philosophies for regulating the digital space. More specifically, the research question is: between self-regulation and active regulation, what room is there for strategic cooperation in the digital space?

First, the article will explore the current global governance system for the digital space. Then, it will move towards the analysis of the different approaches of the EU and US regarding multilateralism and the digital space. Finally, the research will assess the possibilities for such a digital rulebook considering recent social media controversies and their different interests.

Context of the research. Theoretical outlook into global digital policy

The leading claim of constructivism in international relations (IR) is that interactions between agents shape the structure of the international

system. Varied actors, such as states or international organizations, have no choice but to interact and negotiate and these actions constantly shape the system as we know it.[1] This research is a constructivist view of the transatlantic agenda in digital policy and how both the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) shape it. The purpose of this section is to deconstruct the inner workings of the international system as a structure and the behavior of agents that shape the structure.[2]

When it comes to digital policy, multilateralism characterizes the international system. The foundation of the global digital policy is the multistakeholder model that handles the governance of the Internet.[3] Although it is heavily debated and various states (Russia, China) advocate for a more top-down governance and administration of the Internet, the multistakeholder model is still the main form of interaction with regard to the Internet and digital policy, since both state and non-state actors influence the global digital space. A global technology giant like Facebook can change the digital space with its attempt to connect people, while a rogue hacker collective can also take offline vital services even in the US.[4]

A second feature of the structure of the international system is that it is constantly evolving. It evolves by means of the actors' actions. When referring to digital policy in international relations, the structure of the system is not fixed precisely because of the features of the digital space (constantly evolving and expanding). The evolution of the Internet certainly showcases this characteristic, as it evolved from being a space for research and communication to an economic and social space with a growing number of rules that regulate our interactions.

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[1] John Peterson, "Structure, Agency and Transatlantic Relations in the Trump Era," *Journal of European Integration* 40, no. 5 (July 29, 2018): 637–52, https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2018. 1489801.

[2] Alexander E. Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 41, no. 3 (1987): 335–70, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706749.

[3] Jeremy Malcolm, *Multi-Stakeholder Governance and the Internet Governance Forum* (Perth: Terminus Press, 2008).

[4] David E. Sanger and Nicole Perlroth, "Pipeline Attack Yields Urgent Lessons About U.S. Cybersecurity," *The New York Times*, May 14, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/14/us/politics/pipeline-hack.html.

The third feature of the structure of the international system in relation to digital policy relates to agents, more specifically to the emergence of new agents, such as the so-called Big Tech companies. They have a different profile than traditional state actors and, as mentioned above, can shape the system from within since they operate mainly in the digital space. Threatened by the emergence of such agents, state actors and international organizations have stepped up their efforts to intervene in digital issues that were once left to self-regulation. Overall, the interaction between traditional IR agents and new types of agents in the digital space has awakened the willingness of the former to shape the digital space, by means of regulations. In this sense, this article aims to analyze the behavior of two agents, the EU and the US, and their ability to shape global digital policy by their actions and partnership. Their partnership is shaped by occasionally different interests.

The EU and the US – agents in global digital policy

This section will analyze the behavior and interests of the two agents separately and will provide an assessment on their preferred interventions in the global space. This will set the stage for the empirical analysis of the proposed digital rulebook and the compatibility of interests between the two.

The EU

Digital policy has become one of the political priorities of the European Union, a culmination of several years of regulatory efforts to create the Digital Single Market. Indeed, the EU has regulation in its DNA, since its very architecture depends on a common set of rules that states must follow. The basic logic of the European Union is organized around harmonization of national legislation, as well as uniformization of certain rules, which is the case with the Single Market and the Digital Single Market.

The literature references another characteristic of the EU's behavior on the global stage, namely a strong conviction towards multilateralism.[5]

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[5] Mike Smith, "The EU, the US and the Crisis of Contemporary Multilateralism," *Journal of European Integration* 40, no. 5 (July 29, 2018): 539–53, https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2018.1488836.

The most recent Communication of the Commission on multilateralism strengthens this idea, as follows: "multilateralism has been and will remain the cardinal principle of the EU as the most effective means to govern global relations in a mutually beneficial way."[6] Considering its architecture, the conviction towards multilateralism is yet again inspired from the inner workings of the Union. Hence, the structure of the international system is multifaceted and the EU acts as an agent, but in a static way. However, the EU views the world at a crossroads, since various challenges, such as climate change or the pandemic, are threatening the current world order and safety.

Against this backdrop of unsafety, the Communication describes the principles, behavior and interests that the EU has in relation to the multipolar world. The document specifically states that a "well-functioning multilateral system is an EU strategic interest in its own right."[7] It aims for a more agile and assertive involvement in global governance and its actions are guided by an "interests-based approach" that is more in line with the increasingly transactional nature of the global system.[8]

This might also mean that the EU shapes its behavior according to the nature of the system, but, in reality, the EU aims to leverage its interests globally by reaching out to "like-minded" partners. Together, they can shape the system in two manners, according to the Communication: make the world safer and "build back better."[9] The semantic ramifications of this expressions are clear: the agent, the EU in this case, can help shape a better version of the global system. In contradiction with other unilateral visions, the way to build back better is paved by international partnerships and the document references some of them: COVAX, the commitments towards mitigating the effects of climate change etc.

The way to be more assertive in the global system depends vastly on the involvement of the Member States (MS). The EU acknowledges this

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6 High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Joint Communication to the European Parliament and to the Council on Strengthening the EU's Contribution to Rules-Based Multilateralism," February 17, 2021, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/en_strategy_on_strengthening_the_eus_ contribution_to_rules-based_multilateralism.pdf.

7 High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Joint Communication," 6.

8 High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Joint Communication," 2.

9 High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Joint Communication," 3.

aspect in the communication and highlights that it will leverage the power of its Member States in its efforts to be more assertive. The clear coordination of the "actions, positions, and messaging" of the MS and the EU is thus highly necessary.[10] Even though the EU has legal personality, its competences are still limited on the global stage. Hence, one agent is the result of interactions of several other actors in a network. While this position echoes the actor-network theory, there is another strand of literature that shows the EU is sometimes subverted by MS interests.[11] The interaction between the national level and the European level is still a reason of concern for the EU's strength in the global system.[12] The mismatch between preferences is one factor that influences digital policy too, and it will be explored further in the research.

What distinguishes the current global system is the emergence of new trends and challenges that aim to change the system by themselves. Digital challenges are among those identified by the referenced document in the section entitled "Expanding multilateralism to new challenges" and, according to it, the EU "has an interest in extending international norms, standards and global cooperation in priority areas where there is limited or no global governance or where reinforcement is needed."[13] Reflecting on the theoretical outlook, the EU's interest as an agent is to expand the global multilateral system to new areas and its means of action revolve around "active regulatory cooperation." Additionally, the "EU will promote its policy and regulatory approaches" in tandem with its vision towards the digital society in areas, such as the protection of personal data, Artificial Intelligence, as well as the taxation of the digital economy.[14]

Concluding this section, the EU's interest is to shape the global multilateral system and to include digital policy areas within multilateral

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[10] High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Joint Communication," 10.

[11] Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus," *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (January 2009): 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000409.

[12] George Christou and Seamus Simpson, "The European Union, Multilateralism and the Global Governance of the Internet," *Journal of European Public Policy* 18, no. 2 (March 2011): 241–57, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2011.544505.

[13] High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Joint Communication," 8.

[14] High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Joint Communication," 8–9.

fora. To do so, it favors active regulation and regulatory cooperation in various areas, from the protection of personal data to taxation or cybersecurity. This is in line with the literature that characterizes the EU as a "policy factory."[15] These interests and behavior stem from its architecture and, more specifically in digital policy, from its internal intricacies requiring regulation for the Digital Single Market.

The US

The literature has discussed the relationship of the US with the global system, considering the former's superpower status. While the EU is considered a "compulsive multilateralist," the US is more of a "selective multilateralist."[16] It analyzes its interests and follows some in a unilateral manner and others in a multilateral framework, based on several calculations.

Although the US has not displayed yet a clear foreign policy blueprint for the interaction with the global system as the EU, the speeches of the US president and his Europe tour convey the features and brushstrokes of the US involvement in the global system. "America is back" and "America must lead again" are two of the most famous sayings by the current President of the United States, Joseph Biden, with regard to foreign policy. This is the first feature of the US behavior in the multilateral system and they reference a rift from the previous administration's retreat to unilateralism (America First) and disdain for Western alliances.

In his inaugural address, the US President acknowledged the changing global system and the challenges facing it, especially the pandemic.[17] The same address signaled the return of the United States on the global stage with a commitment towards collaboration with its traditional partners: "we will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again."[18] However, the President showcased a future oscillation of America's

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[15] Peterson, "Structure, Agency and Transatlantic Relations in the Trump Era."

[16] Smith, "The EU, the US and the Crisis of Contemporary Multilateralism."

[17] The White House, "Inaugural Address by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.," January 20, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/20/inaugural-address-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr/.

[18] The White House, "Inaugural Address."

role by emphasizing both that it will lead by example and that it will be "a trusted partner for peace, progress, and security."[19] This echoes the characterization from the literature mentioned above that the US is a selective multilateralist.

Biden's speech to the State Department on America's role in the world highlights the selectiveness, as well as the oscillation between the US as a partner and the US as a leader. On the one hand, Biden stresses that the alliances with "like-minded partners" are their greatest assets. On the other hand, Biden illustrates the return of the US on the global stage "to earn back our leadership position, to catalyze global action on shared challenges."[20] Nevertheless, this fluctuation and the diplomatic efforts are rooted in the values proclaimed by the President: "defending freedom, championing opportunity, upholding universal rights, respecting the rule of law, and treating every person with dignity." [21]

Digital challenges are mentioned briefly in the speech, but in a cybersecurity framework, with the announcement of an initiative meant to improve American "capability, readiness, and resilience in cyberspace." The difference with the EU agency towards the international system is clear here, in that the US vision does not necessarily aim to shape the digital space with new rules, but rather to improve its own resources and capabilities. The US vision is in connection with its status as a technological superpower and, hence, it would aim to shape the system on its own terms or to preserve it. Secondly, the EU vision towards the global digital space is societal, while the American one is security-related.

Finally, the US uses diplomatic engagement and the system of alliances as a part of its "naked self-interest." Biden suggests that this type of engagement is tied to and depends on the expression of national interest.[22] While the EU aims to be more assertive and to shape the system, the US aims to affirm its leadership within the system of alliances without any clear

[19] The White House, "Inaugural Address."

[20] Joseph Biden, "Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World," The White House, February 5, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/.

[21] Biden, "Remarks."

[22] Biden, "Remarks."

mentioning of a change in the international system and the digital space. What they have in common is their shared commitment for a like-minded partnership to help boost a set of democratic values. The US shapes the system by means of its renewed commitment for leadership, while the EU aims to shape the system by becoming more assertive and promoting a series of principles for the global digital space. This brings the discussion to the digital rulebook promoted by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, in several discourses. The next sections explore its principles, challenges, and relevant policy issues before the remainder of the paper assesses the potential for EU-US partnership on these issues.

The digital rulebook. Principles and challenges

Von der Leyen expressed the foundational principles of the digital rulebook in a speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2021, as follows: "a set of rules based on our values: human rights and pluralism, inclusion and the protection of privacy. We need to join forces and protect these values with all our energy."[23] At the Davos Forum, the same leader contextualized this set of rules and applied it to the digital space: "together, we could create a digital economy rulebook that is valid worldwide. It goes from data protection and privacy to the security of critical infrastructure. A body of rules based on our values: human rights and pluralism, inclusion, and the protection of privacy."[24]

Hence, the digital rulebook is a set of principles stemming from the shared commitment to democratic values and freedoms that need to be enforced in the digital space, according to the mantra repeated by European leaders that "what is illegal offline should be illegal online."[25] Both agents, the US and the EU, proclaim a respect for values in the international system, but from different vantage points. This mismatch can become an issue in

[23] European Commission, "Speech by the President at the Munich Security Conference," February 19, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_21_706.

[24] European Commission, "Special Address by the President at the Davos Agenda Week," January 26, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_21_221.

[25] European Commission, "Europe Fit for the Digital Age: Digital Platforms," December 15, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2347.

concrete policy issues, especially considering the challenges already on the table for the international system and the digital space.

Misinformation disseminated through social media is a significant challenge for the international system. It helped fuel Brexit, the Capitol riots and even distrust in the vaccination against Covid-19. Von der Leyen blamed the misinformation on the business model of social media giants, which all originate in the US.[26] The American leadership has not been so quick to do so, apart from Congressional hearings that brought the tech leaders to scrutiny, but so far with little effect. More recently though, the American administration classified health misinformation as a "serious public health threat" and called for more action from social media companies to mitigate it.[27] While the American objections towards social media companies have referenced their actions or lack thereof specifically, the objections of the EU leadership go beyond their actions and move towards the way in which they function. These objections hint to the model of surveillance capitalism mapped by Shoshanna Zuboff.[28]

Attempts to rein in social media companies have grown recently. Two issues stand out and are challenges for the digital space, namely taxation practices and antitrust legislation. On the one hand, OECD countries have reached a tentative agreement on taxation, which includes the IT giants. On the other hand, the major tech companies have been under the spotlight of several antitrust investigations, given their appetite for concentration and their practices of buying out the potential competition. Researchers have designated them "meta-platforms" or even markets within themselves.[29] Their increased power and leverage over the public discourse pose a challenge for the digital space and the multilateral order.

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[26] European Commission, "Special Address."

[27] Kaitlan Collins and Donie O'Sullivan, "Surgeon General Issues Warning over Vaccine Misinformation as White House Turns up the Heat on Facebook," CNN, July 16, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/15/politics/surgeon-general-vaccine-misinformation-advisory/index.html.

[28] Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, Illustrated edition (New York: PublicAffairs, 2020).

[29] Phillip Staab, "The Crises of Digital Capitalism, Making Sense of the Digital Society," Berlin, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji_c6pgpP98.

The second challenge revolves around the security of critical infrastructure, more specifically in relation with the advancement of 5G technology. Faster Internet technology points to a significant innovative leap and the major players have reframed this debate into a race between China and the others. The US under Trump affected China's supremacy on 5G technology, and this trend continues under Biden.[30] Additionally, the EU's push towards digital sovereignty extends into the need to secure its Internet infrastructure and, at first sight, this comes against the multilateral model of governing the Internet.

AI is yet another a global challenge and is also framed as a race, with the US as the leader so far. Just as with 5G, the challenge of AI stems from the potential to change the fabric of society fundamentally, from the automation of certain jobs to its applications in the military. The competition narrative replaces a multilateral effort to govern AI, while only the EU has proposed a set of ethical rules to provide a proper fundament for this technology.

The digital rulebook proposed by the President of the Commission refers to principles rather than concrete policy angles that the US and EU should implement and lead the way on the global stage. While the analysis of their foreign policy approaches revealed a shared commitment for "like-minded" partnerships and shared values, their application and the engagement in concrete policy issues may reveal a different picture. The recent EU-US summit in June 2021 highlighted the commitment for more cooperation in such areas. Starting with a brief analysis of the commitments from the summit, the next section approaches the positions and interests that the EU and US have in the digital policy areas featured above as challenges.

Like-minded partners, different interests

Like-minded partners. Joint institutions in technological cooperation

The EU-US summit held in June 2021 ended with a joint statement on the renewal of the Western Partnerships on the same principles and values

[30] Deutsche Welle, "US Designates Huawei, Four Other Chinese Tech Firms National Security Threats," March 13, 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/us-designates-huawei-four-other-chinese-tech-firms-national-security-threats/a-56860474.

that have helped establish the "rules-based international order."[31] Nevertheless, both parties agree that certain rules require an update, and they include technology amongst the areas that require these updated rules. For this purpose, the EU and the US have established a Trade and Technology Council. Among other trade-related tasks, the mandate of the council is to:

- "coordinate, seek common ground and strengthen global cooperation on technology, digital issues and supply chains;
- support collaborative research and exchanges;
- cooperate on compatible and international standards development;
- facilitate regulatory policy and enforcement cooperation and, where possible, convergence;
- promote innovation and leadership by US and European firms."[32]

The focus areas of the Council are technology standards, green tech, ICT security and competitiveness, data governance and technology platforms, "the misuse of technology threatening security and human rights," access and use of digital technologies by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), semiconductors and cross-border flows of personal data. A parallel endeavor is the EU-US Joint Technology Competition Policy Dialogue with a mandate to foster cooperation in the tech sector.[33] Essentially, these domains mirror the challenges presented in the previous section, namely misinformation, which can be seen as a "misuse" of technology, competition, and antitrust policies, as well as security of IT systems.

Collaboration seems to be the key word in the field of technology and digital issues, but, indeed, the joint statement highlights the regulatory autonomy of both parties. The proposed structures and the wording of the statement point to a statement of intent rather than clear-cut initiatives to work together for common goals in digital policy. Shared principles and values are reiterated, but no clear action towards the proposed update of the rules is expressed. Clear joint action is missing because of the differing

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31 European Council, "EU-US Summit 2021 – Statement. Towards a Renewed Transatlantic Partnership," June 15, 2021, 1, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50758/eu-us-summit-joint-statement-15-june-final-final.pdf.

32 European Council, "EU-US Summit," 3.

33 European Council, "EU-US Summit," 4.

narratives that the EU and the US present towards the digital space. These narratives create varying interests in the vast area of digital policy.

Varying interests in digital policy. Is a strategic partnership set?

So far, the potential for a global digital rulebook shaped by the US and the EU is limited to a series of principles and statements of intent, without much clear common actions in policy areas. Additionally, digital issues encompass a variety of policy areas, hence differing interests are inherent. Nevertheless, if the two agents aim to shape the structure of the international space by means of "updating the rules," then a mapping of their positions in several policy areas is highly necessary. This section aims to answer to the core question of the research, namely what room is there for strategic cooperation in the digital space?

Table no. 1 summarizes their positions, based on the challenges for the global digital space and the areas of cooperation presented in the joint EU-US statement.

Table 1: Positions of the EU and US respectively in digital issues. Source: author's own compilation based on the references.

Digital Policy Issue	United States	European Union
Security of critical infrastructure (5G)	Lobbied the EU member states to exclude Chinese companies from 5G procurement[34]	Issued a toolbox for the security of 5G, which essentially guides MS to eliminate Chinese companies from their national networks[35]
AI	Views it as a global race, primarily against China[36]	Created rules for ethical AI[37]

[34] Laurens Cerulus, "Europe's Huawei Plan Explained," *Politico*, January 29, 2020, https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-eu-huawei-5g-china-cybersecurity-toolbox-explained/.

[35] European Commission, "Cybersecurity of 5G Networks – EU Toolbox of Risk Mitigating Measures," January 2020, https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/cybersecurity-5g-networks-eu-toolbox-risk-mitigating-measures.

[36] Politico, "Joe Biden Speech to Congress 2021: Live Analysis, Transcript & Highlights."

[37] European Commission, "White Paper – on Artificial Intelligence – a European Approach to Excellence and Trust," February 19, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission-white-paper-artificial-intelligence-feb2020_en.pdf.

Digital Policy Issue	United States	European Union
Taxation	(Trump) dropped out from OECD talks on the topic (Biden's) initial agreement for a 15% global tax[38]	Has strongly argued for taxation of digital tech. Postponed its own project due to the OECD agreement[39]
Privacy and data protection – surveillance capitalism	Has no federal privacy legislation	Has the General Data Protection Regulation. The President of the Commission has criticized the business model of the social media giants[40]
Antitrust and competition policy	Opened antitrust investigations into the major tech companies, with little impact so far[41]	Investigated and fined the major tech companies several times[42]
Social media platforms, disinformation and regulation of digital markets	Considers disinformation a public health threat. Political actors in the US have called for the repeal of Section 230 that protects social media platforms	Issued two proposals for regulations aimed at building more responsibilities for social media platforms (Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act)[43]

The comparative view presented in Table no. 1 may show that there is no real possibility for alignment between the two agents in certain policy areas. Nevertheless, their positions are evolving as the interests dictate and some areas do experience "seeds of cooperation" and joint action. This research distinguishes between four different positions that the EU and the US take in the abovementioned issues:

- competition,

[38] Richard Partington, "G7 Tax Reform: What Has Been Agreed and Which Companies Will It Affect?," *The Guardian*, June 7, 2021, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/07/g7-tax-reform-what-has-been-agreed-and-which-companies-will-it-affect.

[39] Jakob Hanke Vela, "EU to Postpone Digital Tax Proposal," *Politico*, July 12, 2021, https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-to-postpone-digital-tax-proposal/.

[40] European Commission, "Special Address."

[41] Federal Trade Commission, "FTC Sues Facebook for Illegal Monopolization," December 9, 2020, https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2020/12/ftc-sues-facebook-illegal-monopolization.

[42] Mark Thompson, "EU Antitrust Officials Are Investigating Google's Vast Ads Business," CNN, accessed July 26, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/22/tech/google-eu-antitrust/index.html.

[43] European Commission, "The Digital Services Act: Ensuring a Safe and Accountable Online Environment," 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act-ensuring-safe-and-accountable-online-environment_en.

- different interests,
- seeds of cooperation,
- cooperative relationship.

Considering its statute as a selective multilateralist, the US balances **cooperation** with competition in several digital policy issues. Emerging technologies are areas where agents compete to be able to lay the foundation for their further use. Artificial intelligence and 5G are such areas, where the race for innovation can provide the US with the leadership statute that it desires. This means that the cooperation with the EU can be affected as well, especially considering the different approach that the EU is offering for the development of AI. AI is definitely a domain where there is a mismatch of interests and US aims to maintain its a technological leader statute, but the competition is more directed towards this goal.

Although both have issued statements of intent towards renewing their partnership and their shared commitment for values, the EU and the US also have **different interests**. Data protection, the cross-border flow of data and the surveillance debate are areas where they have differing interests. With the General Data Protection Regulation and its entire ecosystem of privacy legislation, the European Union promotes the model of user empowerment and control of its data. With its history of extended surveillance practices, the United States has differing interests regarding data collection and analysis. Although the surveillance practices of the American government are not in the public eye anymore, Big Tech companies based in the United States promote a similar model of data collection, but for different purposes. Regardless of the different purpose, the interest is the same: data is power. Their practices have been criticized by the European Union on numerous occasions, culminating with Ursula von der Leyen criticizing the very business models of these companies.[44]

In other areas, there are **seeds of cooperation**, namely initial agreement on a joint position or action towards a digital policy issue. There are signs of cooperation, but the political decision-making may disturb or may have disturbed joint action. The taxation of multinational companies, including tech companies, is the prime example, since initially the Trump

[44] European Commission, "Special Address."

administration disagreed with a joint effort within the OECD. Subsequently, Biden administration opened discussions within the G7 and secured an initial agreement on taxation. At the same time, the EU Member States are not all on board this tax rate, as Hungary, Ireland, and Estonia oppose this measure considering their competitive tax rates and the presence of major IT corporations (in the case of Ireland).[45] In the case of the EU, the national level has the potential of derailing collective positions.

Additionally, the regulation of digital markets and platforms is another area where seeds of cooperation are noticeable, especially in competition policy. The EU is more advanced in its efforts, while the American institutions have put forward more statements than concrete action. The representatives of the Big Tech companies have testified for several times before Congress and have been criticized for their role in propagating disinformation and their anti-competitive practices. However, there are signals that the US aims to do more in competition policy, with the appointment of the new head of the Federal Trade Commission considered an antitrust scholar and a tech critic by the press.[46]

Finally, the EU and US have matching interests and **collaborative** relations much more than competing interests. The foundations of the digital rulebook, namely the principles and values, mark this collaborative relationship between the two. The joint statement after the EU-US summit in June illustrates this position. Cybersecurity and the security of 5G networks is yet another issue where the two are collaborating, as the EU Member States lean towards eliminating Chinese companies from bidding in their 5G procurements. Even if the EU has limited competences in security and telecommunications, it has steered the Member States in the direction desired by the United States.

These four instances illustrate that the relationship between the EU and US in digital policy issues is multi-layered and complicated and two

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[45] Euronews, "Ireland, Hungary & Estonia Opt out of Tax Deal and Jeopardise EU Unity," July 2, 2021, https://www.euronews.com/2021/07/02/ireland-hungary-and-estonia-opt-out-of-oecd-tax-deal-and-cast-shadow-over-eu-s-unified-pos.

[46] Lauren Feiner, "Lina Khan, Progressive Tech Critic, Sworn in as FTC Chair," CNBC, June 15, 2021, https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/15/senate-confirms-lina-khan-to-become-ftc-commissioner.html.

reasons explain this situation. First, digital policy is a complex area that integrates many issues, from emerging technologies to privacy and competition. Secondly, the EU has become more assertive in these areas, pioneering regulation that affects the relationship with the US, especially in data protection. All things considered, the strategic partnership between the EU and US is only declarative so far, considering the potential for a mismatch in interests and actions in varying areas of digital policy. Nevertheless, their choices and interests shape the global digital space, as the EU aims for digital sovereignty and the US claims the position of technological superpower.

Conclusions

This article is a constructivist view of the transatlantic agenda and the potential for a strategic partnership between the EU and the US. Stemming from the calls of the President of the European Commission for the establishment of a rulebook for the digital space, the research initially focused on how the two agents shape it by means of statements, narratives, and actions.

The main question of the research has been whether there is room for a true strategic partnership between the active regulation and assertiveness derived from it (EU) and minimal intervention in the digital space, but a focus on technological leadership (US). There is plenty of room, since the proposed partnership is value-based and aims to generate values adapted to the digital age. However, the two agents have varying interests and a fluctuating relationship concerning digital policy, which originate from their behavior in the international system. The US is a selective multilateralist, while the EU has become more assertive in foreign policy, based on its vocation as a true multilateralist.

Based on an empirical analysis of main digital policy issues, the research has identified four different facets of this relationship, namely competition, mismatched interests, seeds of cooperation, and cooperation. They point to a fluctuating relationship, based on shared principles and values, but with no clear alignment on pressing issues in digital policy, such as competition policy, data protection or disinformation.

Herein also lie the limitations of the research. First, a significant limitation is that digital policy is an increasingly complex domain with horizontal implications in other areas and several items have been excluded from this analysis, for the purposes of brevity and conciseness. Next, the change of administration in the US has come with a different agenda in foreign policy that was explored more based on discourses and the media rather than policy documents, as was done in the case of the EU.

As mentioned, the relationship is fluctuating. Three factors can influence it either positively or negatively. First, shared values and norms are non-binding, and political leaders may subvert this commitment. The former Trump administration acted in such a subversive manner. Secondly, the national discourse and conversations may also subvert this potential partnership. EU Member States with their different national interests and polarization in the US are potential influencers, as they can inhibit the possibility for both the EU and US to act internationally. Thirdly, the behavior of other actors regarding digital policy issues can be a catalyst for common action. China is the main competitor of the US in AI and 5G, while the EU has a more ambivalent relationship with the Chinese government. Just recently, the EU and the US have issued a joint statement condemning China for its attack on Microsoft.[47] The Big Tech companies can also bring more concrete joint action by the two agents. They are increasingly under scrutiny in the US, while the EU has launched several separate initiatives to rein them in.

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[47] Euronews, "Microsoft Exchange Email Hack Came from China, Say EU and US," July 19, 2021, https://www.euronews.com/next/2021/07/19/microsoft-exchange-email-hack-came-from-china-say-eu-and-us.

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Main Securitizing and De-securitizing Actors of the OSCE in the Western Balkan Region

ENI LAMÇE

Introduction

Historically, various countries, institutions, regional and international organizations have played a critical role in shaping the developments and the foreign policy direction of the countries in the Western Balkan region. Their role, however, cannot always be considered positive, depending on which periods of historical development one is looking at, but also on which approaches are used to assist or rather pull these countries in various directions. For instance, many scholars have researched the historical role of Turkey in the region starting with the occupation of the Ottoman empire for more than 500 years, but also the role of China as a dominant power in the Western Balkan market economy or, most importantly, the role of the Russian Federation in continuously promoting the "eastern" values in the region. The United States of America, on the other hand, as an historically dominant power in the region, has continuously been promoting "western" values defined by democracy and respect for fundamental human rights.

In this regard, often this dominance over the region has been clearly defined between the power struggle of the East and the West. An enormous number of research papers, books and articles are focused on analyzing and interpreting this relationship between dominant powers in the region. Often these studies refer to the relationship of the regional powers in the Western Balkans as a "field of competition between the "West" and the "East." As the EU is hesitating to include the Western Balkan countries – also because they fear an additional weakening of its value orientation by a premature accession – the 'Eastern' powers started to fight for the sympathies of the

Balkan countries."[1] When referring to the fight for sympathy, it is necessary to underscore that the European Union, however, as a supranational organization since its creation by the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, has dramatically changed the dynamic in the region. Not because it also reflects western values, but especially because it introduced the sense of belonging considering its geographical interconnectedness with the Western Balkan region. Since its creation, regardless of the struggles and setbacks that the EU institutions have often faced, the euro-enthusiasm in the Western Balkans has never faded. These countries have always struggled in their efforts to belong to the EU on paper as they already belong to Europe geographically.

Therefore, many scholars argue that the main political actors that play a crucial role in the Western Balkan region are obvious due to the historical influence they have had in shaping the region's geopolitics. "Leading regional geopolitical players in the region that are present in the Western Balkans are US, EU and Russia, so the main characteristic of the Balkan is that it is more an object than a subject of world politics."[2] Driven by this approach, which has been widely exposed in the literature of the International Relations, this research focuses solely on the role that these three main actors, namely the US, the EU and the Russian Federation have played in promoting security and cooperation in the Western Balkan region.

Based on the existing literature, an early observation on how these three main actors in the region shape the political values and foreign policy of the Western Balkans can be described as follows: the United States of America as the friend, ally and partner of Western Balkans that provides enormous assistance, both financial and in terms of values; the Russian Federation as a country that shows continuous interest in the region and promotes a rather different approach on social values in comparison with those of the US; and finally, the European Union as the actor to which this sub-region would chose to belong, but has not yet "fulfilled" the conditionality criteria for inclusion.

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1 Hannes Swoboda, "Western Balkans: The West Meets East with Its Values and Interests," *European Western Balkans*, September 22, 2020, https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/09/22/western-balkans-the-west-meets-east-with-its-values-and-interests/.

2 Indiana Pejic, "Western Balkans in the Light of Regional Security Complex Theory," *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations* 16, no. 3 (2016): 497.

Regional security complex theory

The central questions of this research are analyzed in light of the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) introduced by the Copenhagen School and its founding fathers, Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver – a theory which best explains the structures of international security with a special focus on regional security. The RSCT especially explains the interconnectedness of the developments within a region as part of the structure of the international system, therefore regional security can be referred to as a sub-structure which is impacted by or it has an impact in global dynamics.[3] In the case of the Western Balkan sub-region, the global dynamic is reflected through the impact of the great global powers in the region whose actions and ideologies can be interpreted in various ways in order to better understand the distribution of power in a global security perspective. "At the opening of this century, Europe's great powers raced to carve up the region, often decreasing their own security through excessive engagement. At the close of this century, Europe's powers did their best to stay out of the Balkans, decreasing their own security through too little engagement."[4] The interaction between great powers can be interpreted in a way to explain the impact they have had in the countries in the region, their neighborly relations, the internal politics, as well as the management of borders which are geographically inter-connected.

In light of the Regional Security Complex Theory, the Western Balkans are considered to be a crucial case study in the literature of international security. The RSCT is composed of several levels of analysis which explain the processes of securitization and de-securitization, particularly in light of the role that the main actors of the global system have played in the region. When taking a closer look at this theory, scholars

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3 Barry Buzan, Jaap de Wilde and Ole Wæver , *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 11.

4 Charles A. Kupchan, "After Pax Americana: Benign Power, Regional Integration, and the Sources of a Stable Multipolarity," in *International Security, Debating Security and Strategy and the Impact of 9-11*, vol. IV, ed. Buzan Barry and Lene Hansen (London: SAGE Publications, 2007), 100.

understand that there are two notions associated with it, which give a more concise meaning to Buzan and Wæver's perspective, such as the balance of power and the interdependence of states. These two notions have long proven through history that they can best describe the international relations of states, be they within a particular region, or with regard to the region's relations with one another. This research focuses particularly on the role of the main external actors in the Western Balkan region, shedding light on the promotion, struggle for and establishment of security at a regional level through the help of regional and international organizations, particularly referring to the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the Western Balkan region.

It is crucial to emphasize that the Western Balkan region, though located geographically in Europe, has over time been considered a distinct regional complex substructure of Europe, despite being an exact part of its structure, geographically speaking. Therefore, in terms of security, when scholars refer to European security, the Western Balkan region is not necessarily seen as part of the larger European regional security, but rather as a sub-region which needs distinct levels of security of its own, driven by the distinct challenges that it faces, which as a matter of fact are always considered to be very different from the security challenges that Europe faces. Taking in consideration Buzan and Weaver's definition of a region, one can perfectly picture the Western Balkan region as several units linked together not only geographically, but also in terms of their securities; as a result, they cannot be considered or understood separately from one another. "Both the security of the separate units and the process of global power intervention can be grasped only the understanding the regional security dynamics."[5] This definition explains that the security of the countries in the Western Balkan region and the role of the regional powers in the Western Balkans can lead to a single regional security perspective.

It is with certainty that one could identify the Western Balkans as a separate regional security complex, due to the historical background of their economic and cultural inter-connection, but can scholars also refer certainly

[5] Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 43.

and distinctly to the security of each of the countries in the region? The Regional Security Complex Theory does not suggest so and in this regard, it argues that it is important that security in the Western Balkan countries should be seen in a regional perspective. Does this mean, then, that security in Europe in relation to security in the Western Balkan countries should be seen distinctly? Not necessarily, even though, due to their historical past, the Western Balkan countries are characterized by very similar features in terms of political backgrounds, processes of democratization and the setbacks deriving from their historical conflicts (often referred to as distinct in comparison with those of the European Union countries), security in the region is very much linked with security in Europe.

However, when considering the Western Balkan countries in a regional perspective it is necessary to note that, consequently, the similar features have brought similar challenges that the region faces, and these challenges have not only derived from geographical inter-connection and inter-dependence, but most importantly from the role that the external powers played in the region. If these actors used the same approach in each of these countries in the region, then one cannot identify them as a separate security complex on the whole. Buzan and Waver argue that "Superpowers by definition largely transcend the logic of geography and adjacency in their security relationships."[6] This is especially verified in the history of the Western Balkan countries where the security interests of the main actors of the region often impacted the neighborly relations of the countries in relation with one another as well.

The historical developments in the Western Balkan region have shown that there are three main actors that have played a crucial role in defining the security concerns in the region: the European Union, the United States of America and the Russian Federation. Often scholars have noticed that the relations of these three great powers with one another vary from one security challenge to the other, in some cases witnessing an alliance between the European Union and the United States which poses a rivalry towards the opposite approach of the Russian Federation and therefore reflecting these approaches also in the developments in the Western Balkan region. "One of

[6] Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 46.

the purposes of RSCT is to combat the tendency to overstress the role of the great powers, and to ensure that the local factors are given their proper weight in security analysis."[7] This definition is especially relevant to the study of the security complex in the Western Balkan region, because often when analyzing the security challenges that the region faces, one could get lost in the role of the global powers, forgetting the domestic challenges that the region truly faces. This characteristic best defines the RSCT, as the power pressure imposed on the Balkan Region over the years has proven that sometimes the different approaches in promoting peace processes of each of these actors have been very complex or even not as effective; one could argue that they come as a result of the lack of unipolarity in the security approaches towards the region.

The securitization paradigm

The Copenhagen school has addressed the securitization processes based on a more systematic approach, focused mostly on the "distinctive patterns of interactions."[8] In order for one to understand the securitization paradigm, it is highly relevant to first understand the various sectors where securitization processes occur in a complex system. These sectors play a crucial role in facilitating the analysis of the securitization dynamics. The main sectors that the founding authors of the securitization paradigm refer to in the process analyzing securitization are found in the military, environmental, economic, societal and political sectors. Driven by the nature of the analysis of this research topic, the research focuses only on the analysis of the military and political sectors of securitization processes applied in the context of the OSCE debate. Even though often all five of these sectors overlap with one another due to the inevitable interconnectedness of international politics and the multi-layered impact of the historical events, this research tries to narrow down the focus on answering its specific central questions regardless of the equal importance that all the earlier-mentioned sectors deserve.

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[7] Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 46-47.
[8] Buzan, de Wilde, Waever, *Security*, 8.

The founding authors of the securitization paradigm describe very clearly the role that each of these sectors plays in the security studies analysis, namely: the military sector tends to focus on relationships of forceful cohesion; the political sector concentrates on relationships of authority, governing status and recognition; the economic sector looks at trade and financial interactions; the societal sector facilitates the analysis of collective identities in terms of both cultural and social sustainability; and last but not least, the environmental sector examines the human relationship with nature.[9] Therefore, it is important to explain why, in the context of this research, the economic, societal and environmental sectors are "left behind." This is especially important because this research tries to figure out who the main securitizing actors of the OSCE debate in the region are, and why they try to securitize; therefore, in order to answer this question, one has to figure out: what is there to securitize?

In the case of the Western Balkan region, historical developments clearly explain the conflictual nature of the countries, both regarding their relationship with one another but also domestically concerning ethnic or political ideologies that different parts of the population represent. Therefore, putting an emphasis on the military and political sectors of the securitization processes in the OSCE debate makes more sense in the context of this research, particularly driven by the nature of the instruments that this Organization provides in terms of promoting a platform for dialogue towards conflict management and conflict resolution. Moreover, another important reason is the fact that this research focuses on two different periods, the first addressing the conflictual past and the second addressing the new narratives formulated with regard to the democratization process and the rule of law. In this way, it particularly brings to light the way in which conflictual Western Balkan countries of the past try to promote security and cooperation among all countries in the OSCE area by chairing the Organization. This contribution can also be explained more easily by the political sector of the securitization processes creating a parallel duality of the securitization phenomenon: in one period on being securitized itself and

[9] Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 73-74.

during the post-conflict period on also being able to securitize other conflicts affecting Europe.

However, the securitization processes in this research concentrate especially on tackling the role of the main actors in the region, namely, the United States, the Russian Federation and the European Union in this regard. In order to understand what securitization means in the context of the debate of the main actors in the region, one needs to differentiate the conceptualization of securitization from politicization. As different scholars have put it, "securitization is a rule-governed practice, the success of which does not necessarily depend on the existence of a real threat, but on the discursive ability to effectively endow a development with such a specific complexion."[10] Driven by this context, this research tries to figure out whether the concerns related to the Western Balkan region have been given appropriate attention in terms of the multilateral approach of the diplomacy that international organizations try to promote. Politicization, even though very closely linked in definition with securitization, is considered to be a softer form of identification of security threats. Politicization can be defined as the effect of turning a matter into a subject of public discussion which influences after all the quality of decision making.[11] Therefore, in order to avoid the confusion between the two terms and their effects, the research explains how the securitization paradigm is better suited to explain the role that international organizations, in this case the OSCE, play in addressing security threats.

The de-securitization paradigm

One would think that the de-securitization paradigm is supposed to refer to the opposite process of securitization, perhaps leading to not even providing security at all against the challenges at hand, however that is not necessarily the case. While this research referred to securitization as the process of turning subjects of concern into matters of security threats

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[10] Thierry Balzacq, "The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context," *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 2 (2005): 179.

[11] Pieter De Wilde and Michael Zürn, "Can the Politicization of European Integration Be Reversed?," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 50, no. 1 (2012): 139.

through the involvement of the instruments provided by international organizations in an authority relationship, the de-securitization process refers to minimizing the matters of concern through political dialogue and therefore also minimizing the involvement of international organizations in addressing these concerns, and sometimes also making them vanish completely. This provides a serious debate in security studies as scholars have often investigated and examined processes where a huge amount of attention has been given to certain matters, turning them into security threats, whereas less attention or importance has been given to other concerns which might be more prone to be considered security threats than the actual already de-securitized matters.

Also, in this case there is a need to draw the line between de-securitization and non-politicization. While the term non-politicization refers to the process of avoiding turning certain subjects into matters of public debate, policy making or decision-making process, de-securitization can be referred to as a "rather slow move out of an explicit security discourse, which in turn facilitates a less militaristic, less violent and hence more genuinely political form of engagement."[12] In this relation, this research explains in more detail how these facilitations can occur in the context of the debate of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and which instruments become less visible during the de-securitization processes.

However, in order to get a deeper understanding of the de-securitization paradigm, it is crucial to point out several processes that happen when de-securitization occurs. Lene Hansen, in a study conducted at Cambridge University, categorizes the de-securitization processes into three forms: replacement, re-articulation and silencing.[13] In this regard, de-securitization sometimes occurs also as a process of replacement, which tends to combine one "issue moving out of security while another is simultaneously securitized."[14] The replacement process happens often in debates organized by international organizations, which consequently replace certain issues of concern with other issues which suddenly gain more

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[12] Lene Hansen, "Reconstructing De-securitization: The Normative-political in the Copenhagen School and Directions for How to Apply It," *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 3 (2012): 539.

[13] Hansen, "Reconstructing De-securitization," 529.

[14] Hansen, "Reconstructing De-securitization," 541.

attention at a particular time and place. Therefore, it is important to figure out whether this has also been the case in the OSCE debate, particularly in the agendas involving developments in the Western Balkan region or, if it has not been the case in an organizational perspective, perhaps it could have been the case in the attention paid by one actor to the other.

Moreover, another form where de-securitization occurs can be referred to as the re-articulation of an issue, which removes the concern "from the securitized by actively offering a political solution to the threats, dangers and grievances in question."[15] The re-articulation process of de-securitization can be also considered as an often-used method in security approaches, and this usually happens because of the intervention of states' political interests into the matter, and, as a result, the solutions provided are also political in nature. In the case of international organizations, re-articulation sometimes occurs when an issue has been considered a threat or a rising concern by several Member States, and the parties that usually reflect the views of this concern take an immediate action that could lower the level of concern; this usually happens at a very superficial level, consequently tending to barely provide a solution at all.

Finally, an additional process when de-securitization occurs (and, in fact, the most common one not only in international organizations but also in any sphere that touches world politics), is considered to be silencing "when an issue disappears or fails to register in security discourse."[16] In this case, the concerns do not disappear, but the effect of silence aims at removing them completely from the debate. Unfortunately, some of these concerns that are prone to silencing because of political reasons or interests tend to be the concerns that require serious attention. Also, in this case, in order to understand whether silencing occurs in the OSCE debate, the focus concentrates on investigating the authority relationship from one actor to the other, the ones who silence the concerns and the ones who continuously bring the silenced concerns at the center of the debate for genuine care towards the concern or rather simply for political reasons.

[15] Hansen, "Reconstructing De-securitization," 542.
[16] Hansen, "Reconstructing De-securitization," 544.

In concluding the conceptualization of the various processes of securitization and de-securitization, it is important to understand when these processes could be tackled in the debate of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Driven by the fact that, during the mid-90s, the Western Balkans were faced with serious turmoil which required genuine efforts towards conflict prevention and resolution, one can expect to tackle securitization in the debate established within the conflict period. During recent years when democracy has prevailed and some of these countries have been able to successfully chair the Organization, one can expect to tackle only processes of de-securitization. In this regard, it is important to investigate the new narratives that remain at the center of the priorities of the main actors which at the outset reflect their goal to continue enhancing security and cooperation in the Western Balkan region.

Regional developments in the Western Balkan region

During mid-90s, the Western Balkan countries of today faced numerous challenges and setbacks as a result of their lack of cooperation and grievances in relation to territorial disputes. Therefore, cooperation with the International Court was and still is until today crucial in order to bring the suspected criminals who attempted war crimes to justice and who, in fact, caused broader violence and criminal activities, particularly during the conflicts involving the Former Yugoslavia, which before its breakup in 1991 was composed of parts of Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Serbia and North Macedonia.[17] It is important to note that the conflicts in the region started to take a different turn after the introduction of the South Eastern Europe Stability Pact in 1999, a document which served as a call for cooperation in the region.[18] However, the progress achieved in the historical

[17] Christian Axboe Nielsen, "Book Review: Ethnic Conflict and War Crimes in the Balkans: The Narratives of Denial in Post Conflict Serbia, written by Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik," *Southeastern Europe Journal* 39, no. 1 (April 2015): 123-26, https://doi.org/10.1163/18763332-03901008.

[18] Victor-Yves Ghebali, "The OSCE and the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe," in *The Operational Role of the OSCE in Southeastern Europe. Contributing to Regional Stability in the Balkans*, eds. Victor-Yves Ghebali, Daniel Warner (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2001), 57.

developments in the region has occurred also due to the Western Balkan countries' long-lasting quest to be part of the European big family; in this regard, the European Union has played a key role in promoting values and principles of democracy and human rights in these countries aiming to establish regional reconciliation.

Regional geopolitics

Historical and geographical contexts give a broad understanding to the regional developments, and this is particularly true in the case of the Western Balkans. The geographical factor has been a real influence on the region's historical processes and its political developments. The terminology Western Balkans is often used to refer to the countries of South Eastern Europe, but the borders where the region begins and where it ends remain debatable among scholars and historians. In many studies, regions are usually defined by a composition of historical, political and geographic criteria. The Western Balkan region, among other characteristics, has been well-known for its geopolitical interconnectedness among countries, its geo-economical transactions and its geo-cultural interactions.[19] "In fact the Stability Pact can be seen as a sort of operational 'Balkan Helsinki'".[20] The historical developments in the region are considered a clear proof of the region's political interdependence due to the long-lasting conflicts and dependency on the external actors or, better said, dependency under the great powers. For instance, the Ottoman occupation in the region for over 500 years played a determining role in shaping its culture, economic transformations, military administration, as well as social aspects.

However, the historical developments in the Western Balkan region caught the attention of the international community, particularly in 1990s when several wars were associated with destruction of cities and villages, displaced persons, high flows of refugees, ethnic turmoil and even genocide as we have seen in the case of Srebrenica. The Yugoslav crisis erupted in 1991, and since then many international organizations specialized in

[19] Elizabeth Pond, *Endgame in the Balkans* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2007), 193-202.
[20] Ghebali, "The OSCE," 58.

security-related fields have been involved aiming to promote peace and stability in the region.[21] The ethnic conflicts in the region, the hatred and adversities between nations came as a result of separatist nationalism, which was particularly the case with the Former Yugoslav Republic. Moreover, these conflicts provoked ethnic cleansing which led to high levels of corruption in the media, manipulation of public conscience and reinterpretation of the history in order to maintain political power.[22] This was particularly the case with Slobodan Milosevic, whose cruel politics, often described as populist and highly nationalist, left deep marks in the region. One of the major international organizations that played a key role in resolving the region's turmoil through the use of hard power was the United Nations. The UN played an important role, particularly through the Security Council UNTAES resolution 1037, authorizing the deployment of 5000 military troops in 1996 and demilitarization and opening of checkpoints in 1997.[23] In mid-1990s, notably there was an increasing role of the OSCE in the region which on the other hand uses soft power through enhancing dialogue between the participating States in order to establish peace and security. The role of the organization at the time was particularly led by the involvement of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, whose role was focusing on observing the elections and ensuring enhancement of democratization processes in the Western Balkans.

One country which has faced numerous ethnical conflicts but also serious war crimes, such as with the case of the Srebrenica genocide, was Bosnia and Herzegovina. These conflicts were mainly inherited from the Yugoslav wars and led to economic degradation and challenges within governance structures on the representation of different ethnic groups who tended to face continuous conflicts with one another in Bosnia Herzegovina. The 1992-1995 conflicts left Bosnia Herzegovina wrecked and the Dayton Peace agreement played a crucial role in the efforts of countering ethnic

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[21] Reneo Lukic and Allen Lynch, *Europe from the Balkans to the Urals: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 284-95.

[22] Eric Remacle, "The Co-operation between International Organizations in the Management of the Third Yugoslav War," in Ghebali and Warner eds., 69-76.

[23] Willy Hanset, "A Success Story: The United Nations Transitional Authority for Eastern Slavonia," in Ghebali and Warner eds., 5-6.

cleansing and the de facto partition of the Bosnian territory.[24] The 1995 Peace Agreement, which as a temporary solution, created two ethnic bases in Bosnia Herzegovina – caused many confusions and complications in the relations of Serbia and Bosnia with regard to the division of duties in governance. The solution deeply affected the speed of the decision-making process in both countries and it created many obstacles in the implementation of constitutional reforms as Bosnia became very dependent on Serbia.[25] However, the essential role of the DPA is underlined particularly in Article II and Article IV of Annex 1-B, which introduced for the first time the arms control regime and Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) in the Western Balkans. These endeavors consequently turned the attempts of the dominant powers towards promoting conflict resolution into a success, initially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the aftermath in the region as a whole.

Serbia, on the other hand, faced numerous challenges itself, not only in relation to the territorial disputes with Kosovo and the internal ethnic divisions but most importantly in the unfinished process of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. During 1995, the economic sanctions on Serbia started to ease. However, after the escalation of the crisis with the war on Kosovo initiated by the Milosevic regime, the sanctions were reinforced on Serbia, resulting in pulling back the country from its development. The bloody wars continued for months causing enormous damage to people's lives until the hard power intervention of the NATO allies, which bombed the Serbian troops that intervened in Bosnia and Kosovo, emerged as the only solution for preventing conflict escalation – a decision taken after all diplomatic efforts were put into place and were ignored by the Milosevic regime. Therefore, the NATO Kumanovo agreement played a crucial role in the withdrawal of Yugoslav troops from Kosovo in 1999. Moreover, the parliamentary elections in 2000 played a positive key role in transformation of Serbia, which has been long characterized by high nationalistic sentiments, putting an end to the decade-long regime of Milosevic in the country.

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[24] Robert L. Barry, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Status Report," in Ghebali and Warner eds., 20-23.

[25] Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth, and the Destruction of Yugoslavia,* 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 211-24.

Montenegro's progress has also been deeply influenced by its historical background as once part of the Former Yugoslav Republic, as well as a Federal country with Serbia. In 2006, Montenegro requested independence from Serbia through a referendum which was approved by 55.5% of the people.[26] Due to this interconnectedness, the European Union used a "doppio" diplomacy approach towards Serbia and Montenegro in the process of European integration particularly to negotiate on economic and trade issues. Moreover, in 2008 when Kosovo declared its independence, Serbia faced a lot of internal issues from the rise of nationalism among its population. However, during its OSCE Chairmanship in 2015, Serbia pledged to play a neutral role in the discussions involving the developments in Kosovo, a role which had to be in line with the principles and commitments that the OSCE represents.

North Macedonia decided to join the European path in 1992 and after remaining a candidate country for many years, finally entered the phase of the negotiations process with the European Union in 2020, along with Albania. North Macedonia too has faced many problems from a regional perspective, one of the most critical ones being the issue with Greece concerning its name, which in 2019 changed from Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to North Macedonia.[27] For over two decades Greece raised this issue implying that using the name FYROM in the Constitution of the country can be interpreted as a potential basis for territorial intervention in the territories of Greece. This concern has been a unique case the history of Europe. Another regional issue which threatened the relations of Macedonia with neighboring countries has been also the severe and continuous violations of human rights of the Albanian minority population living in Macedonia as well as the civil war of 2001, which put the stability and security of the region in danger. The conflict resulted later on in the signing

[26] Judy Batt, "Montenegro and Serbia after the Referendum," European Union Institute for Security Studies, May 1, 2006, https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/montenegro-and-serbia-after-referendum.

[27] Stephania Halasz, Elinda Labropoulou and Sheena McKenzie, "Macedonia Officially Changes Name to North Macedonia, Drawing Line under Bitter Dispute," CNN, February 13, 2019, https://edition.cnn.com/2019/02/13/europe/north-macedonia-name-change-intl/index.html.

of the Ohrid Agreement, which would prioritize the multi-ethnic basis of the country – an agreement that dramatically changed the status quo and established a more peaceful and harmonic cohabitation.

As mentioned earlier, Kosovo declared its independence in 2008 and until today still faces issues of national legitimation, driven by the fact that its Independence Declaration was not supported by all the members of the United Nations Security Council due to the unresolved territorial disputes with Serbia, as well as due to the lack of governance control in the Kosovo territories in the North, which are composed of Serbian majority. "As far as the International Community is concerned, the crisis in Kosovo should first be seen as a result of a preventive diplomacy failure."[28] This failed endeavor deeply affected Kosovo's internal politics and led to weak institutions, rule of law, media freedom, human rights and high levels of corruption and organized crime.[29]

Albania stands out from the regional ethnic conflicts, as the country does not face any inter-ethnic issues and most importantly did not get involved in the Yugoslav wars, due to the fact that it was not part of the Former Yugoslavia. Moreover, Albania is also well-known for not facing religious conflicts either, being a secular country where all religions live in harmony with one another. In this regard, Albania has historically played the role of regional stabilizer in the Western Balkans, serving as the voice of reason in promoting peace and stability in the region. However, during 1990s Albania faced a serious economic and democratic crisis, building up on the ruins of the communist past. In addition, with regard to its domestic developments, the parliamentary elections of 1996 in Albania were a clear violation of democratic standards; in addition, the extension of pyramidal schemes was followed up by serious chaos in the country. Therefore, even though Albania was not part of the well-known regional wars, it faced numerous crises which were political, economic, but also security destabilizers in terms of its domestic developments, and therefore this factor also played a determining role in the slow pace of Albania's European

[28] Dan Everts, "Kosovo: Status Report," in Ghebali and Warner eds., 37.
[29] Everts, "Kosovo," 38-40.

integration process.[30] But as Ghebali and Warner point out, "Albania's role in the Balkans is a crucial one. It needs stability, particularly so given the continuing ethnic and political tensions in the neighboring regions of Kosovo, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where the ethnic Albanians are found."[31]

In this regard, it is important to note that what made these 6 countries in the region so geopolitically connected were not only similarities in the challenges and setbacks they faced (be they domestically and also regionally) but most importantly in their mutual aspirations towards the European Union integration path. The EU path did not only play a vital role in enhancing unity between these countries but also motivated them towards accomplishing the conditionality criteria which improved their domestic developments and standards of living. Most importantly, the EU path kept alive the hopes and future aspirations to belong to the big European family.

Transition period

A majority of the Western Balkan countries faced significant transformations when shifting from a communist regime to democratic governance. The communist regimes before 1990s left deep marks which were not easy to overcome regardless of all the efforts. Therefore, as described earlier, the transformation period towards peace and democracy was a gradual process and perhaps even a slow one, where the major role was played especially by the European Union. This role is particularly highlighted in the level of euro-enthusiasm that dominated in the Western Balkans for a long time – a phenomenon which continues until today regardless of the long-lasting European integration process. However, we cannot fail to mention the assistance provided by the OSCE in every step of the transition process. Two initiatives can be noted during the OSCE's involvement in the region that have played a dramatically positive role in the region, such as the Stability Pact and the Istanbul Charter.

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[30] Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, "Albania: Status Report," in Ghebali and Warner eds., 30-36.
[31] Ahrens, "Albania," 36.

The Stability Pact was proposed by Germany in 1999 and endorsed by the European Union, and it became possible through the approval of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Western Balkan region at the time, including Albania, FRY, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Turkey.[32] The pact was more or less aimed at the integration of the region in the Euro-Atlantic security and economic reconstruction, however the focus was not only on economies but, most importantly, it aimed at promoting open and pluralistic societies that would concentrate on establishing sustainable peace and democratization in the region. The areas that the Stability Pact touched upon played an especially inspirational role in the mandates of the respective Field Missions of the OSCE that got established in the region, dealing with a variety of fields: media, human and minority rights, good governance, gender issues, return of displaced persons and refugees, promotion of education and most importantly supportive efforts towards promoting cooperation at regional level. Moreover, the Stability Pact focused also on the field of defense and security aiming to closely monitor concerns related to arms control, confidence and security building measures, non-proliferation of arms, de-mining and conflict prevention, conflict resolution, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The Permanent Council of the OSCE played a crucial role in this regard by adopting a decision that would give the OSCE the leading role to contribute and comply with the issues raised in the Stability Pact.

Moreover, the Istanbul Charter, which was also agreed in 1999, also played an important role by aiming to promote an emerging security guarantee in the OSCE region as a whole but with a special emphasis on the Western Balkan region – an endeavor deriving especially in the aftermath of the Kosovo war initiated by the Milosevic regime. This endeavor was achieved after many rounds of consultations of the participating States and due to their commitment to assist in a collective self-defense of the OSCE area in accordance with the shared OSCE principles and commitments. Even though this Charter played an important role as a milestone document of the OSCE to promote stability in the region it was not so easy to achieve due to

[32] Ghebali, "The OSCE," 55-68.

the different perceptions of Russia with the West.[33] Therefore, the fact that this Charter was agreed considering all the conditions that Russia imposed in order for the Charter to become binding make the document itself an historical milestone in the transition period of the Western Balkans but also a milestone marking the willingness of cooperation between the East and the West. One of the conditions of the Russian Federation was the exclusion of the "consensus minus one," which suspended Yugoslavia back in 1992 from the OSCE – an instrument which has been used only once since OSCE's history of establishment.[34] The Charter, however, would have a clear emphasis extending the mandates of the Missions, including those in the Western Balkan region, taking cooperative actions to a collective security approach as well as cooperating closely with other security organizations such as the United Nations, NATO and other European security organizations where the OSCE's role was considered most important.

Conclusion

This research referred briefly to the historical developments in the Western Balkan region, explained in more depth the Regional Security Complex Theory, and stressed the main features that define the processes of securitization and de-securitization. In this regard, the research concludes as follows.

With regard to conceptualizing the Western Balkans, perhaps it would make more sense for this research to refer to the region as South East Europe in line with the way of in which the OSCE refers to the region. However, the term Western Balkans, metaphorically speaking, appears to separate the region from the term Europe, although it is geographically located in it. Therefore, this terminology is used also with the purpose of reflecting the long-lasting struggle of these countries, striving to belong to the big European Union family. The aspirations and endeavors of the

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33 Victor-Yves Ghebali, "The 1999 Istanbul Charter for European Security: A Critical Assessment," in Ghebali and Warner eds., 77-85.

34 OSCE, "Serbia and Montenegro Suspended as a Participating State," https://www.osce.org/node/58332.

Western Balkans towards EU integration and their chosen foreign policy path were also stressed with regard to defining the interconnectedness of the countries in the region in line with the approach that Regional Security Complex Theory represents.

However, in this regard, it is also important to underline that among all countries in the region, Kosovo stands out in its struggles towards becoming a member of the international community as a whole, as highlighted in the table illustrated below. The question of Kosovo's eligibility to become a member state in the international community is also associated with the role of the main regional powers in the Western Balkan region, rather than just with the disagreements in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, where the Russian Federation in particular, in its capacity as one of the five permanent members of the UNSC, continuously opposes Kosovo's membership in the UN but also in the OSCE.

Table 1. Western Balkans and International Community

Western Balkans	Geographical location	OSCE Membership	UN Membership	NATO membership	EU Integration	OSCE Chairmanship	OSCE Field Mission
Albania	SEE	19 June 1991	14 December 1995	2009	Candidate negotiating	2020	1997
Bosnia & Herzegovina	SEE	30 April 1992	22 May 1992	Not a member	Potential candidate	-	1995
North Macedonia	SEE	12 October 1995	8 April 1993	2020	Candidate negotiating	2023	1992
Montenegro	SEE	22 June 2006	28 June 2006	2017	Candidate negotiating	-	2006
Serbia	SEE	10 November 2000	1 November 2000	Not a member	Candidate negotiating	2015	2003
Kosovo	SEE	Not a participating State	Not a member state	Not a member	Potential Candidate	Not a participating State	2000

Therefore, measuring securitization and de-securitization in the debate of the OSCE is important to understand how these actors influence the destiny of Western Balkan countries and the future of the region as a whole. Most importantly, measuring these paradigms is necessary in order to understand whether these actors use an inclusive and comprehensive approach in addressing security concerns in the region.

Lastly, with regard to regional geopolitics, evidence shows a firm determination over the years relative to the aspirations of the six Western Balkan countries aiming towards the European Integration path. These

aspirations have helped the countries in the region commit to establishing democratic structures in their societies in line with the OSCE principles and commitments and the European standards. Due to this commitment, the Western Balkan countries, from a period of conflict, starting from 1995 when the OSCE was established until 2001, when the turmoil in the region came to end, have reached a point of giving back to international organizations by taking a leading role in promoting peace and stability not only in a regional context but also internationally. This evidence can be seen particularly in the efforts of the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship in 2015, the efforts of the Albanian 2020 OSCE Chairmanship, as well in the aspirations of North Macedonia to become the third Western Balkan country to chair the Organization in 2023, a decision adopted by the consensus of all the OSCE participating States at the Ministerial Council of 2020.[35]

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[35] OSCE, "27th OSCE Ministerial Council," 2020, https://www.osce.org/event/mc_2020.

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The Coordinates of the Economic and Political Relations between Japan, China and South Korea. Implications for the Relation with the United States of America and the European Union

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The general context

June 2021 was marked by two very important events that brought together one of the most powerful and influential countries in the world. First, we need to mention the G7 Summit hosted by the United Kingdom, in Cornwall, where, besides the G7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the UK), there were also other guests invited to the discussions: Australia, India, South Africa, South Korea and the European Union. Among the topics that were approached by the participants, we have to mention the following: the COVID-19 situation, environment and climate change, global economic recovery and taxes paid by the big multinational companies.[1] Another important aspect was the fact that President Joe Biden made a very important declaration on this occasion, stating that "America is back at the table."[2] This declaration comes as President Biden wants to make it clear that he does not support the "America First" policy that the former President, Donald Trump, adopted. While President Trump's strategy led to the US

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[1] Douglas Broom, "Global Solutions: Four Things that Came out of the G7 Summit," *World Economic Forum*, June 15, 2021, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/06/g7-summit-covid19-tax-environment/.

[2] BBC News, "G7 Summit: Biden Says America Is back at the Table," June 14, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-57462047.

exiting the Trans-Pacific Partnership or the 2015 Paris Climate Accord and negatively influenced the bilateral relations that the US had with the European Union, Japan or South Korea, President Biden made it clear that he was ready to embrace a different foreign policy.

At the same time, the G7 powers are trying to create a common front in order to overcome the rising power of China and Russia. Another important decision made during the summit was the declaration addressed to China by the participants, asking it to take measures and respect human rights, following the events that took place in the Xinjiang region and Hong Kong. The G7 group could not ignore China's abuse of the Muslim Uighur minority as allegations appeared that people are detained in camps, tortured, sexually abused, and forced to work.[3] Also, another important event worrying the G7 countries is the National Security Law imposed by China in Hong Kong, as the law forbids the right to freedom of peaceful assemblies and restricts the freedom of expression.[4]

China's reaction came soon, as a representative of the Chinese Embassy in London declared that all countries are equal, no matter their power and size, and that "the days when global decisions were dictated by a small group of countries are long gone."[5]

The same month, the NATO members participated in the 2021 Summit in Brussels. Even if Japan and South Korea are not NATO members, they are partner countries to the Organization. On this occasion, the importance of long-term cooperation with Japan and South Korea, among others, was reaffirmed, and the importance of enhancing the political dialogue and practical cooperation was underlined.[6]

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[3] BBC News, "Uighurs: Western Countries Sanction China over Rights Abuses," March 22, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56487162.

[4] "The Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region," 2020, https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/fwddoc/hk/a406/eng_translation_(a406)_en.pdf.

[5] Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, "Embassy Spokesperson's Remarks on the So-called 'Rules-based International System' Advocated at the G7 Summit," June 12, 2021, http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/PressandMedia/ Spokepersons/t1883513.htm.

[6] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Brussels Summit Communique," June 14, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm.

Therefore, we can notice the importance of the relations between the countries that we decided to analyze from the economic and political point of view: the United States of America, Japan, China, South Korea and also the European Union. They are key actors at international level, and it is important to understand the implications of their relations.

If we look at Japan's leading export partners in 2020, it is easy to see that in the top 3 we will find China, the United States of America and South Korea, as presented in the table below:

Table 1. Japan's Exports by Country in 2020[7]

Japan Exports by Country	Value	Year
China	$141.40B	2020
United States of America	$118.79B	2020
South Korea	$44.69B	2020

Therefore, when we discuss Japan's bilateral relation with China, one of the most important things to be highlighted is the fact that China is Japan's largest trade partner. Moreover, since 2020 China has been trying to negotiate a free trade agreement with Japan and South Korea in order to increase the trade in the area.

In this context, even if over the years there were many tense moments that occurred between Japan and China, it was important for both countries to find solutions that would satisfy both sides. Even so, at present the situation is quite tense between the two countries. After China's actions in the South China Sea in 2020, many countries stepped out and denounced these practices, the USA being one of the most vocal ones.

This problem goes back to 2016, when an arbitration court decided that China did not have the right to take over most of the South China Sea, as it claimed its historical rights in the area. China never took the decision of the arbitration court into consideration and managed to transform 7 artificial islands from the area into military bases, stating that they have self-defense purposes. Despite their official declarations, the government of the

[7] Trading Economics, "Japan Exports by Country," https://tradingeconomics.com/japan/exports-by-country.

Philippines declared in March 2021 that about 220 Chinese vessels were spotted in military formation.[8] Therefore, China is still trying to challenge the territorial rights in the area and more and more countries from around the world are condemning China's actions.

Japan is also one of the nations that publicly affirmed its disagreement with the situation. The issues were addressed during the summit held between Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and US President Joe Biden in April 2021, when a joint statement was released, underlining the importance of the security of the Taiwan Strait.[9]

As the Japan Institute of International Affairs also stated, it is important that Japan cooperates with the United States in order to develop joint operational plans to deal with this problem. Also, Japan is taking into consideration the possibility of cooperating with Taiwan for defense purposes. As concrete measures, it is expected that by the end of 2021, Japan will revise its 2013National Security Strategy, to enforce the cooperation with the United States in order to contribute to stability in the Taiwan Strait.[10]

Still, it is not the first time that Japan has dealt with uncomfortable situations in its relation with China. The dispute over the Senkaku Islands (Japanese name)/Diaoyu Islands (Chinese name) is another relevant example. Even if, officially, the islands are Japanese territories, China has tried several times to challenge the former's territorial rights upon them. Still, since the islands were not included in the Treaty of San Francisco (when Japan returned some territories they had conquered in the past to China), they remained Japanese territories. The United States of America is also part of this context as, in case of a conflict over the islands, the US will intervene on Japan's side since the bilateral Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security signed by Japan and the USA also includes the islands.[11]

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[8] Sakamoto Shigeki, "The Global South China Sea Issue," *The Diplomat*, July 4, 2021, https://thediplomat.com/2021/07/the-global-south-china-sea-issue/.

[9] Tetsuo Kotani, "JIIA Strategic Comments (2021-01): The New Taiwan Clause: Taiwan and the Security of Japan," The Japan Institute for International Affairs, June 1, 2021, https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/strategic_comment/2021/06/2021-01.html.

[10] Kotani, "JIIA Strategic Comments."

[11] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Situation of the Senkaku Islands," April 4, 2014, https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_m1/senkaku/page1we_000010.html.

Another sensitive topic that worries many countries, including Japan, is the situation of human rights in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Japan has strongly expressed its disagreement with the situation. Japan also took position when it came to introducing the National Security Law in Hong Kong by China.

Therefore, we can notice that even if we are talking about two countries that value their bilateral economic cooperation, some important issues are putting their relation to the test, and it is hard to foresee how their bilateral relations will develop in the future.

The background of Japan and South Korea's bilateral relations

Moving forward in our analysis, we have to look at Japan's closest neighbor, South Korea. Even if we are looking at two countries that have a lot in common with regard to their cultural background, at present the cooperation between Japan and South Korea finds itself in one of its worst moments. Even if there was hope that, after the election of a new Japanese Prime Minister, the tensions between the two countries will be defused, after the first conversation between Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and President Moon Jae-In, the hopes were left aside. Prime Minister Suga made it very clear that both sides understood that they must cooperate in order to overcome the COVID-19 crisis and also make a common front in the face of the North Korean threat, but no other areas of cooperation were discussed.[12]

In order to understand why the Japanese-South Korean relations are at such an impasse, we have to look back at their historical background. The main event that still influences their cooperation is the Japanese occupation of Korea that took place between 1910 and 1945. Unfortunately, even if many years have passed since then, both sides are still in the shadow of this event. Even though Japan has tried in different ways to compensate for the damages of the occupation, South Korea always draws attention to the atrocities they had to endure.

[12] Satoshi Sugiyama, "PM Suga Talks with Moon for First Time but Signals No Fresh Start," *Japan Times*, September 24, 2020, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/09/24/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-suga-south-korea-moon-first-call/.

One of the first and major instruments that were meant to bring Japan and South Korea closer was the "Japan and Republic of Korea Treaty" signed in 1965. The Treaty offered generous grants (300 million USD) and extended loans (200 million USD) to the Korean side.[13] Even if financial help was offered, the Korean side also expected official apologies from Japan that were never offered until recently.

Therefore, even if the occupation ended many years ago, its effects were still present throughout the years. As a relevant example, we can look at the comfort women issue that was brought to the attention of the public by the Korean side at the beginning of the 1990s. Korea condemned the fact that during the occupation, Japanese officers and soldiers forced Korean women to provide sexual services for them. In response, Japan created the Asian Women Fund that offered financial, medical and welfare support to the victims. Also, the Japanese Prime Minister sent an official apology letter to each person that would benefit from the Fund.[14]

Unfortunately, the Korean side put a lot of pressure on the women accepting the support, therefore many victims were afraid to come forward and ask for aid. Also, the Korean authorities decided to offer their own support to the victims who did not accept Japan's help. Therefore, because it encountered such a strong resistance from the Korean side and the beneficiaries were strongly encouraged to not accept the aid, Japan decided to end the project in 2002.[15] Nevertheless, this topic is not forgotten, even in recent times, there were conflicts that appeared because of this subject. For example, in 2018, the sisterhood relation between the cities of Osaka (Japan) and San Francisco (USA) was about to end when a comfort women monument was unveiled in the city of San Francisco.[16] Just one year later, in 2019, another related incident appeared at the Aichi Triennale when a statue

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13 "Japan and Republic of Korea," June 22, 1965, https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20583/volume-583-I-8473-English.pdf.

14 Asian Women's Fund, "Projects by Country or Region-South Korea," https://awf.or.jp/e3/korea.html.

15 Asian Women's Fund, "Projects by Country or Region-South Korea."

16 Christine Hauser, "'It Is Not Coming Down': San Francisco Defends 'Comfort Women' Statue as Japan Protests," *The New York Times*, October 4, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/04/us/osaka-sf-comfort-women-statue.html.

dedicated to comfort women was revealed. Because the organizers received many complaints and even threats, they decided to close the exhibition for safety reasons. The exhibition was open again just after the statue was removed.[17]

Another recent event that affected companies from all over the world was the semiconductor scandal that took place in 2019. Because South Korea's Supreme Court decided that some Japanese companies had to pay compensations to former Korean Peninsula laborers, Japan decided to stop the export of three important materials used by South Korean producers to produce semiconductors and display screens. The Korean side reacted immediately and started a process of boycotting the Japanese products and threatening that it would end some important bilateral agreements.

We can see that, unfortunately, when it comes to the bilateral relation between Japan and South Korea, the past casts a shadow over the present and events that tragically happened many years ago still influence their cooperation in the present. This conclusion also comes from the territorial disputes that the two countries have over the Dokdo (Korean name)/ Takeshima (Japanese name) Islands. The islands are former Korean territories conquered by Japan that were not included in the San Francisco Treaty which returned some of the territories to Korea.[18]

Japan's strategic partnerships with the USA and the European Union

To continue our research, we will analyze the relation between Japan and one of its most important partners, the United States of America. The most recent event that marks the importance of their bilateral relation is the US-Japan summit that took place in April 2021. The meeting of the newly elected leaders, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, had the purpose of reaffirming the good relations between the two countries, but also showing a common front in relation to China, Russia and North Korea.

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[17] ArtReview, "Aichi Triennale Closes Exhibition after 'Comfort Women' Complaints," August 8, 2019, https://artreview.com/news-6-aug-2019-aichi-triennale-censorship/.

[18] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Takeshima," https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000092147.pdf.

The most important topics addressed during the meeting were: the importance of the US-Japan Security Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security underlining that it also covers the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, the concerns regarding China's actions in the Taiwan Strait, but also the importance of the denuclearization of North Korea.[19] The Summit also generated two new bilateral partnerships: the Competitive and Resilience (CoRe) partnership and the US-Japan Climate Partnership.[20]

When we talk about the Japan-US cooperation, it is important to also mention the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, an initiative promoted by Japan together with the United States, India and Australia that brings together the international community. The Strategy is founded on the following three pillars as they are presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan: promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, the pursuit of economic prosperity and commitment to peace and stability.[21]

Therefore, we can notice the importance of the long-term cooperation between Japan and the United States of America as it grew constantly since 1945, when Japan was defeated in the Second World War and the Allied Forces occupied Japan. This period left an important mark on Japan, starting with the new constitution which was written following the model of the American constitution. Also, because the new constitution included a very important article that did not allow Japan to have an offensive army (only for defense purposes), the cooperation between Japan and the US became even more vital. In 1951, when Japan regained its sovereignty, the US-Japan Security Treaty was signed. The Treaty stated that both sides would have to

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[19] The White House, "U.S.-Japan Joint Leaders' Statement: U.S. – Japan Global Partnership for a New Era," April 16, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/16/u-s-japan-joint-leaders-statement-u-s-japan-global-partnership-for-a-new-era/.

[20] The White House, "Fact Sheet: U.S.-Japan Competitiveness and Resilience (CoRe) Partnership," 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/FACT-SHEET-U.S.-Japan-Competitiveness-and-Resilience-CoRe-Partnership.pdf; The White House, "U.S.-Japan Climate Partnership on Ambition, Decarbonization, and Clean Energy," 2021, http://whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/U.S.-Japan-Climate-Partnership.pdf.

[21] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," April 1, 2012, https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page25e_000278.html.

resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner and, in case of any conflict, the United Nations would intervene.[22] Since then, the cooperation between the two countries has consolidated constantly.

The European Union is another important partner for Japan, May 2021 marking the 27th summit between the two parties. During the summit, both sides underlined the importance of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, while the EU wanted to expand its presence in the Indo-Pacific region, launching the "EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific." Regarding the global challenges, both sides launched the Japan-EU Green Alliance in order to take more accelerated measures to protect the climate and environment. The COVID-19 crisis was also approached, as Prime Minister Suga was assured that the EU would continue to export anti-COVID 19 vaccines to Japan. Both parties agreed to continue to support and develop the three important bilateral agreements: the EU–Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and the Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure. Last, but not least, the security issues were addressed, and both sides agreed on the importance of maintaining peace and security in the Taiwan Strait; they also expressed their concerns regarding the difficult situations present in Hong Kong and in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.[23]

Japan and South Korea – common goals, different paths

Having presented the main directions in the bilateral relations between Japan and some of the most powerful and important countries and communities in the world, we will continue with underlining how Japan can consolidate its position in a global context. Even if we speak about a country with a small territory and limited natural resources, it is easy to see that Japan has managed to become an important global actor.

In the same manner, it is easy to observe that one of the neighboring countries, which has many things in common with Japan, managed to

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[22] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan-U.S. Security Treaty," https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html.

[23] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "The 27th Japan-EU Summit," May 27, 2021, https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/ep/page4e_001135.html.

succeed following a very similar path to the former. South Korea is also a country with limited natural resources, without a big territory, people being the most important resource for both Japan and South Korea. Also, even if the colonial rule of Japan in the Korean Peninsula brought a lot of difficulties for the Koreans, there were also some positive aspects that need to be remembered. Japan brought to the Peninsula important projects that led to the development of South Korea. We are speaking here about projects that contributed to the development of infrastructure, the education and healthcare systems. All of these were important for the country's economic development in the future.

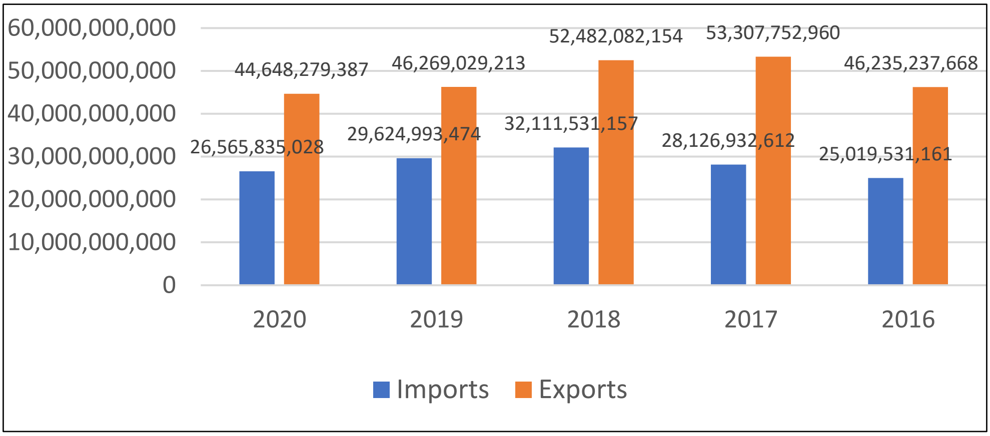


Fig. 1. Japan's Exports and Imports to/from South Korea (US $)[24]

Also, South Korea's important economic growth since the 1960s based on the export-oriented strategy is very similar to Japan's way of reaching economic success. Both countries focused on manufacturing industrial and heavy industry products, and this led to an amazing economic development. Therefore, we can notice that besides their disagreements, the countries have a lot in common. South Korea is Japan's third largest trading partner as seen in the chart.

Also, if we analyze the top 10 categories of exports from both Japan and South Korea in 2020, we notice that they are direct competitors in many important areas:

[24] United Nations, "Trade Statistics," https://comtrade.un.org/data, accessed August 10, 2021.

Table 2. South Korea and Japan's Top 10 exports (2020)[25]

South Korea's Top 10 exports (2020)	Japan's Top 10 exports (2020)
Electrical machinery, equipment (31,1% from total export)	Vehicles (19,1% from total export)
Machinery including computers (13,2%)	Machinery including computers (19%)
Vehicles (10,6%)	Electrical machinery, equipment (16%)
Plastics, plastic articles (6,2%)	Optical, technical, medical apparatus (5,8%)
Mineral fuels including oil (5%)	Plastics, plastic articles (4%)
Optical, technical, medical apparatus (3,9%)	Iron, steel (3,6%)
Iron, steel (3,9%)	Organic chemicals (14,9%)
Ships, boats (3,7%)	Gems, precious metals (2,1%)
Organic chemicals (3%)	Other chemical goods (1,9%)
Articles of iron or steel (1,5%)	Ships, boats (1,7%)

Therefore, it becomes obvious that if both set left aside the problems caused by their common history and tried to join forces and cooperate in the areas where they are competing now, together they would be able to occupy a much more important role on the global market.

To continue our analysis, we would like to also underline Japan's and South Korea's common cultural values. Their cultural background is strongly influenced by Chinese culture, from the writing systems (both are still using Chinese characters), religious beliefs, traditional arts to the societies built on Confucianist values. It is easy to notice that both countries have similar religious beliefs as they adopted Buddhism from China, but they also believe in Shintoism (Japan) or Shamanism (Korea) – the belief that gods inhabit objects, animals, mountains, etc.

The cultural influences coming from China can also be noticed in literature and many of their traditional arts. For example, we can see that both countries have very similar traditional musical instruments, the only difference being their names: Koto (Japan) and Gayagum (South Korea), Taiko (Japan) and Samulnori (South Korea).

[25] Daniel Workman, "South Korea's Top Exports," "Japan's Top Exports," *World's Top Exports*, https://www.worldstopexports.com/south-koreas-top-10-exports/, worldstopexports.com/japans-top-10-exports/, accessed August 10, 2021.

Also, as mentioned above, we are talking about two countries with very limited natural resources and territory that understood that their most important and valuable resource is their people. Therefore, it is no wonder that they invested a lot in creating some of the best educational systems in the world. People also understood the importance of education, living in very competitive societies, they are one of the most hard-working nations, always thriving for more.

The Confucianist values created two nations in which the family is the core structure of the society, with an accent on hierarchy and respect for the elderly and the more experienced peers. Those values were also extended to the community level; therefore, the Koreans and the Japanese think about their country as if it were their family. This is maybe why they both have difficulties in accepting foreigners into their communities.

Another important aspect that brings together Japan and South Korea is the use of soft power in order to make themselves known at international level. Both countries understood the importance of these instruments with a particular focus on pop culture. In recent years, Korean and Japanese music groups have gained international recognition, with people from all over the world listening to their music.

For example, one of the most famous groups of singers from South Korea, BTS, was invited by UNICEF to give a speech in 2018, and then again in 2020, since they advocate for self-love and solidarity among young people.[26] Moreover, the group was appointed by the South Korean President, Moon Jae-In, as "Presidential Special Envoy for Future Generations and Culture" in July 2021. BTS will also represent South Korea in numerous global forums, including the 75th United Nations General Assembly in September 2021.[27]

Besides the fact that pop culture is bringing Japan and South Korea closer to the rest of the world, it also brought them closer together. In 2003, NHK, the Japanese national television station, broadcast the South Korean

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[26] UNICEF, "BTS Heartfelt Message to Young People at UNGA," https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/BTS-LoveMyself, accessed August 10, 2021.

[27] Yan Lim Ruey, "BTS Appointed as South Korea's Special Presidential Envoy for Culture," *The Straits Times*, July 22, 2021, https://www.straitstimes.com/life/entertainment/bts-appointed-as-south-koreas-special-presidential-envoy-for-culture.

TV series *Winter Sonata*. The series became so popular in Japan that it led to an increased number of Japanese tourists visiting South Korea, as presented by Nippon.com based on the data published by the Japan National Trade Organization and the Korea Tourism Organization:

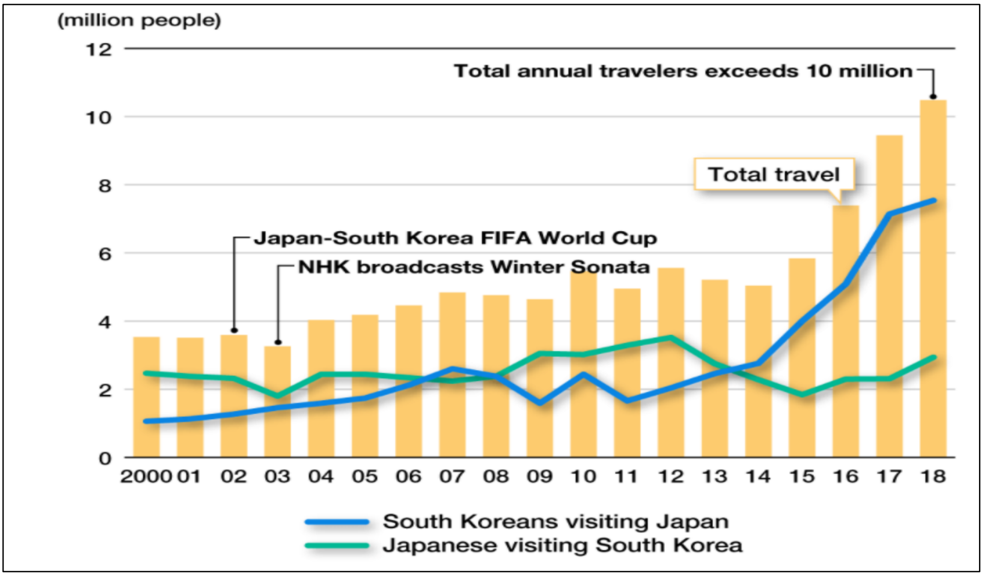


Fig. 2. South Koreans visiting Japan and Japanese visiting South Korea[28]

Taking into consideration all the information presented above, we are able to see that Japan and South Korea have many things in common. Moreover, both countries have the United States of America as their most important strategic partner. At the same time, one of the most important threats in the area is North Korea, while both countries have a dual relation with China – a very big country, an important economic partner, but with an unstable position from the political point of view. Therefore, our opinion is that if Japan and South Korea were able to leave behind the unpleasant aspects of their common history, solve their territorial and commercial disputes, and bring together their common values, they would be able to become a new power pole in the area.

[28] "South Korea: Japan's Third-Largest Trading Partner," *Nippon.com*, August 20, 2019, https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h00516/south-korea-japan%E2%80%99s-third-largest-trading-partner.html.

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Soft Power Perspectives: Assessing Romanian Youth's Support for a New Transatlantic Erasmus

IULIA-ANAMARIA GHIDIU

Introduction

The year 1995 saw the launching of the EU–US Higher Education and Training Agreement together with the New Transatlantic Agenda. It was renewed in 2006 for another eight years by Council Decision 2006/910/EC (the *Atlantis Program*). The objective was to promote "understanding between the peoples of the European Union and the United States of America and [to improve] the quality of their human resource development, by supporting Transatlantic Degree actions, Excellence Mobility Projects, Policy-oriented measures, and Schuman-Fulbright scholarships."[1]

In 2004 Erasmus Mundus was launched, to provide EU-funded scholarships for extra-EU citizens enrolled in master's courses and for EU students at partner universities outside the Union. Later, in 2014, Erasmus+ began as the European Union program for education, training, youth and sport, financially supporting academic mobility and cooperation projects with partners from Program Countries and Partner Countries throughout the world.

More recently, political figures and representatives of the epistemic community support the proposal of adapting transatlantic higher education exchange programs, potentially through a New Transatlantic Erasmus.

Erasmus+ now and then

In 2020, 34 Program Countries included the 27 EU Member States along with seven other European countries. Erasmus+ supports activities

[1] European Sources Online, "Information Guide-EU-US Relations. A Guide to the European Union's Relations with the United States of America," 2014, http://aei.pitt.edu/75414/2/EU-US-Relations.pdf.

closely matching the EU's priorities for cooperation with partner countries and regions.[2]

Erasmus opportunities continue in the new Erasmus+ program 2021-27. This has an estimated budget of €26.2 billion, nearly doubling the funds allocated to its predecessor (2014-2020). 70% of the budget will support mobility opportunities for all, with a lifelong learning perspective.

The 2021-2027 program aims at social inclusion, green and digital transitions, and promoting the participation of youth in democratic life. More precisely, the program will develop the European Student Card initiative, in full compliance with EU personal data protection legislation, enabling students to access online courses and services provided by higher education institutions and also allowing them to enjoy cultural activities throughout Europe at lower prices. The initiative is in line with the objective of a European Education Area to be created by 2025.[3] Moreover, the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ program is designed to support youth-led local and transnational initiatives run by young informal groups or youth organizations to engage in civic society-related issues through Youth Participation Activities.[4]

Since 2015, Erasmus+ has allowed short-term mobility to Europe from other parts of the world for students, researchers, and staff. This two-way mobility means one can study in a foreign university for 3-12 months, obtaining credits that will be recognized by the sending institution as part of the student's degree. From 2018 onwards, traineeships are also available. This means that students can also apply for a working program during their studies abroad.

There are distinct budgets for different regions of the world, divided between all the European countries. Between 2015-2017, the budget for

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[2] European Commission, "Erasmus+ for Higher Education in USA," 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/america-caribbean/us_erasmusplus_2020.pdf.

[3] European Commission, "European Student Card Initiative," https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-student-card-initiative_en.

[4] European Commission, "Erasmus+ 2021-2027, Enriching Lives, Opening Minds through the EU Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport," March 23, 2021, https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ff1edfdf-8bca-11eb-b85c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en.

Canada & the United States represented almost 5% of the entire international mobility budget.[5]

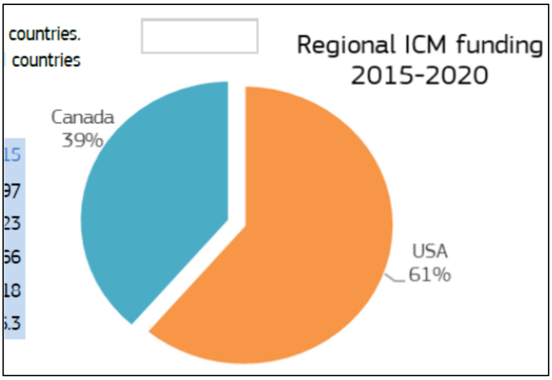


Fig. 1. Regional ICM funding. Source: Erasmus+ for higher education in USA

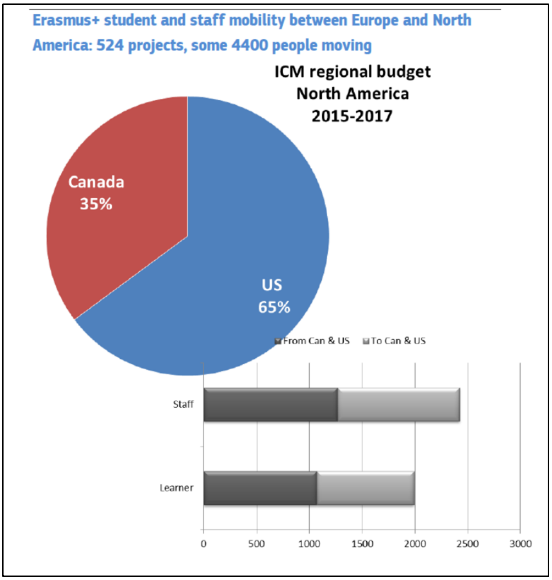


Fig. 2. ICM regional budget North America 2015-2017.
Source: EU cooperation with Canada & the United States through Erasmus+

Institutions from Program Countries may form *bilateral partnerships* with universities from industrialized states and apply on behalf of their

[5] European Commission, "EU Cooperation with Canada & the United States through Erasmus+," March 2018.

partners. As depicted in the table below, from 2015 to 2020, 1255 projects involving the US were selected.[6]

	TOTAL	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Proposals received involving USA	2 210	388	392	373	330	330	397
Projects selected involving USA	1 255	339	330	156	165	142	123
Students and staff moving to Europe	2 878	404	419	509	586	494	466
Students and staff moving to USA	2 636	378	404	474	494	468	418
Percentage of regional budget (see chart)	58.2	44.8	42.4	59.6	64.5	63.1	66.3

* Chile and Uruguay also benefited from regional budget in 2019

Table 1. Projects involving the US. Source: Erasmus+ for higher education in USA.

Opportunities for Master and PhD students

There are also study opportunities for master students. Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMDs) award EU-funded scholarships to Master students worldwide covering tuition, travel, and a living allowance. The programs last from one to two years and the students can apply to study in at least two different European states obtaining a joint, double degree, or even multiple degree.

Institutions from Partner countries can also take part either as Full Partners, thus officially awarding degrees, or as Associated Partners, participating in the program in a limited capacity, thus not awarding the joint degree.[7] The US is to be found among these partner countries (under the headline *Other Industrialized countries-Region 13*).[8]

North American partners

Between 2014 and 2017, 63 institutions from North America were involved in 41 of the 108 selected EMJMDs. Of these, 11 engaged as full educational partners. The United States were increasingly represented in

[6] European Commission, "Erasmus+ for Higher Education in USA."
[7] European Commission, "Erasmus+."
[8] European Commission, "Erasmus+ Who Can Take Part," https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/who-can-take-part_en.

EMJMD programs with 48 US participating institutions. The University of British Columbia (Canada) and The Regents of the University of California (US) ranked among the top participating institutions.

USA in EMJMD projects	TOTAL	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Total EMJMDs selected	250	46	51	44	39	27	32	11
Total proposals received	713	100	107	112	122	92	119	61
Proposals received involving USA	185	29	30	46	30	19	19	12
EMJMDs selected involving USA	96	17	22	21	12	10	13	1
Full partners from USA in EMJMDs	55	5	42	0	2	5	1	0
Associates from USA in EMJMDs	113	28	1	33	20	13	17	1

Table 2. USA in EMJMD projects. Source: Erasmus+ for higher education in USA.

As per the above table, between 2014 and 2020, a number of 96 selected proposals out of a total of 250 involved the US. Last year, in 2020, out of the total of 46 selected EMJMD proposals, a number of 17 involved the US as partner country. The percentage of proposals involving the USA has fluctuated over the last years (financing duration), reaching a peak in 2018 (48% out of the total selected proposals).

The EU funds each EMJMD to award a certain number of scholarships to students around the globe. Between 2014-2020, 487 EMJMD scholarships were allocated to North America (see chart below).

	TOTAL	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Scholarship-winners from USA	**362**	**63**	**54**	**49**	**53**	**44**	**44**	**55**
Scholarships worldwide	11 816	2 427	2 130	1 669	1 556	1 347	1 308	1 379
EM programmes offering scholarships		130	103	86	100	87	120	149

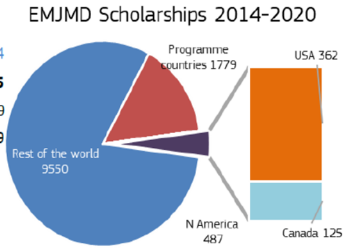


Fig. 3. EMJMD Scholarships 2014-2020.
Source: Erasmus+ for higher education in USA.

In addition, the Fulbright-Schuman fellowship program offers American and European PhD candidates, researchers and lecturers the chance to apply for research or post-graduate opportunities at European or American

universities in the field of US-EU relations. The Fulbright-Schuman Program is jointly financed by the US Department of State and the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission.[9]

In an interview with a Fulbright Junior student (2004-2006), with an academic background in museum and cultural studies, as well as with the beneficiary of a Fulbright Junior Visiting Researcher scholarship in Boston, as part of her PhD studies, we have discovered new dimensions regarding European and American perspectives on culture and approaches to it, as well as to the system of higher education.

Even though misconceptions/stereotypes about Europeans and Americans will continue to exist, largely speaking, people going to study abroad can definitely be the exception to the rule. Therefore, study mobilities are seen as a good opportunity to learn more about each other's values and to influence/adjust people's initial perception (framing) about a different country and society. They can help build bridges across cultures in the EU and the US. Our interviewees saw them as mandatory within future transatlantic relations and conveyed that more exchange opportunities between the two sides, including through extending the Erasmus study as well other particular programs, would be highly welcomed.

The model of (American) pluridisciplinary universities was considered much more beneficial in the case of related fields of study (i.e. museum studies-visual arts-cultural studies-music), as academic interactions could have been enabled more easily whenever the case. Also, informal networking was more powerful.

The conclusions of the interviews showed that educational and cultural programs – as a soft power tool – can contribute to the strengthening of EU-US bilateral ties in general, and influence cooperation in other fields of interest. The Fulbright Program is a living proof in this regard. In a sense, educational exchanges can become, from a tool of "soft power," one of "smart power," as they aim to go beyond the traditional approach.

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9 European Commission, "EU Cooperation with Canada & the United States through Erasmus+."

Towards a new Transatlantic Erasmus. An appeal from the epistemic community and political circles

In his article, "Joe Biden and the Future of Transatlantic Relations," Hendrik W. Ohnesorge, Managing Director of the Center for Global Studies (CGS) and Research Fellow at the Chair in International Relations at the University of Bonn, discussed the indispensable soft power dimension, "crucially springing from civil-society actors, universities or cultural institutions,"[10] that the new US administration must consider carefully in the current, interest-driven multipolar international environment.

It "should strive to re-open and strengthen U.S. institutions of higher education and make them more accessible and attractive for international students again. While the Covid pandemic has, of course, thwarted international students' plans and programs, the Trump administration also set new hurdles, for example with the introduction of new visa regulations. With the Biden administration coming in, major revisions can be expected in this field as well, once more making U.S. colleges and universities major assets for U.S. soft power, drawing the best and brightest to American shores and creating life-long ambassadors after visiting students and scholars return to their home countries.[11]

Providing incentives for qualitative education models, innovation and knowledge is a visible necessity in today's liberal democracies. Valentin Naumescu, professor of International Relations at the Faculty of European Studies in Cluj-Napoca and President of the association Initiative for European Democratic Culture, underlines the major five, tightly interconnected driving forces that will design the future global power competition, considering, among other aspects, the more and more prominent US-China fight for world dominance: education, technology, climate, communication and ideology. "However soft it may seem, it is on the alignment of the five modelling society forces and on these highly dynamic 'fronts' at international level that the tough struggles for tomorrow's world dominance will be fought, culminating with the US-China confrontation that will oppose two fundamentally distinct visions of the

[10] Hendrik W. Ohnesorge, "Joe Biden and the Future of Transatlantic Relations," December 1, 2020, https://www.e-ir.info/2020/12/01/joe-biden-and-the-future-of-transatlantic-relations/.

[11] Ohnesorge, "Joe Biden."

world. The one better prepared, the most competent, most context-adapted or less vulnerable on the abovementioned lines will win the competition."[12]

Considering the growing interdependencies at global level (underlined even by the current pandemic), Vasile Pușcaș, professor of International and European Negotiations at the Faculty of European Studies and founder of the Center for International Negotiations, Cluj-Napoca has suggested that a Euro-Atlantic Erasmus program can be a first step towards a new Global Erasmus, that could, in time, extend to other continents as well. "A Euro-American Erasmus would contribute not only to the qualitative advancement of education, but also to that of research-innovation and cultural relations in the EU, the USA and Canada,"[13] he affirmed in a column contribution for *Euractiv.*

Additionally, member of the European Parliament Victor Negrescu and the US Senator from Maryland, William Smith, have proposed the idea of a new Transatlantic Erasmus as part of a set of measures to relaunch the traditional transatlantic partnership. "The time is now to be bold and to recover the soul of the transatlantic dialogue," they said.[14]

They presented the idea of a new Transatlantic Erasmus designed to enable young people to travel, study, work and develop private, cultural and non-governmental initiatives together. "Both of us call upon decision makers from both sides of the Atlantic to launch the idea of a new Transatlantic Erasmus designed to enable young people to travel, study, work and develop private, cultural and non-governmental initiatives together."[15]

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[12] Valentin Naumescu, "Cele cinci forțe care schimbă lumea și cum va culmina criza globală cu războiul pentru supremație SUA-China" [The Five Forces that Change the World and How the Global Crisis Will Culminate with the War for Supremacy between the US and China], July 22, 2021, https://spotmedia.ro/stiri/opinii-si-analize/cele-cinci-forte-care-schimba-lumea-si-cum-va-culmina-criza-globala-cu-razboiul-pentru-suprematie-sua-china?fbclid=IwAR2yssavfRfDj1dVJH6iw9I_oH6KlGR-M8wTRDlFnOH0z8kZdrsqsYVxxG8.

[13] Vasile Pușcaș, "The Moment for Euro-Atlantic Integration," Euractiv, January 6, 2021. https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/opinion/the-moment-for-euro-atlantic-integration/.

[14] Victor Negrescu, Will Smith, "Build Back Better: Critical Steps towards Improving Transatlantic Relations," Euractiv, January 21, 2021, https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/opinion/build-back-better-critical-steps-towards-improving-transatlantic-relations/?fbclid=IwAR3bP6o5rrBZIwUoyXdWTYab6iWixNxxZNwv9eYrUtut1ZIS-efjeFdO10A.

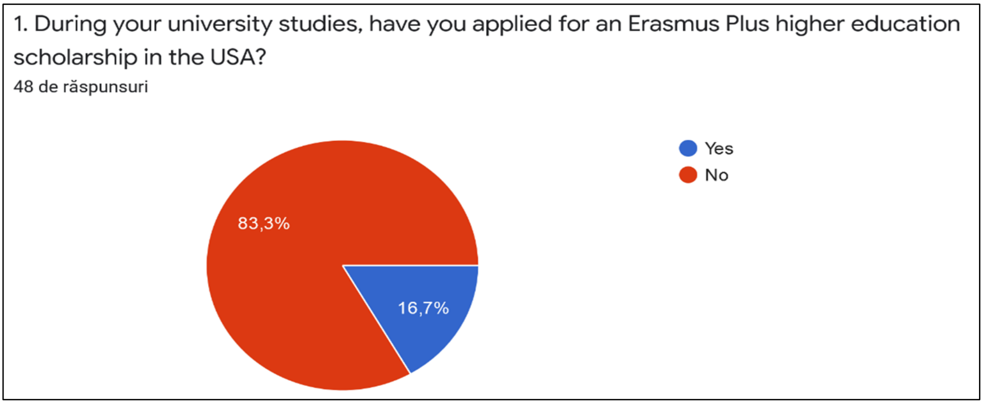
[15] Negrescu, Smith, "Build Back Better."

On the same note of considering the digital and green transitions, they noted that: "Education should play a key role in fostering cooperation and prepare American and European citizens for the digital and green transformations that are currently happening."[16]

A new Transatlantic Erasmus in the Romanian youth's perception

In April 2020 we started an online opinion survey as part of a broader academic study about the evolution of the transatlantic relation. The survey aims to identify and analyze Romanian youth's perception about the potential of a joint transatlantic Erasmus program to adjust perceptions and stereotypes between Europeans and Americans, to increase cultural awareness and strengthen cultural, political and economic ties between the two societies. Respondents were aged between 19 and 33, both male (23, 4%) and female (76,6%), from both the urban (93,6%) and rural areas (6,4%). We present here the results of the initial survey that show an interesting insight into the issue, the Romanian young population's perception on our research topic. All the charts are based on the responses received and compiled by the author.

1. 83.3 % of the people surveyed responded they did not apply for an Erasmus Plus higher education scholarship in the US. Only 16.7% applied for this.

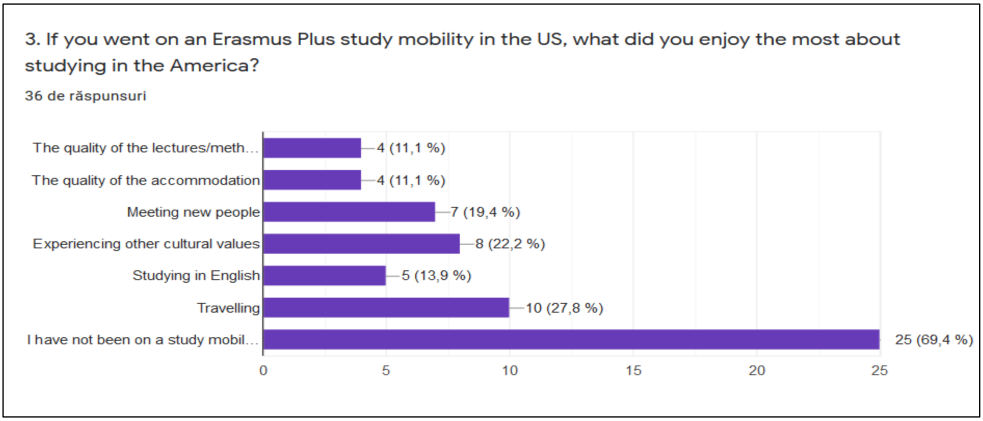


2. What students enjoyed most about the mobility was:
   - traveling

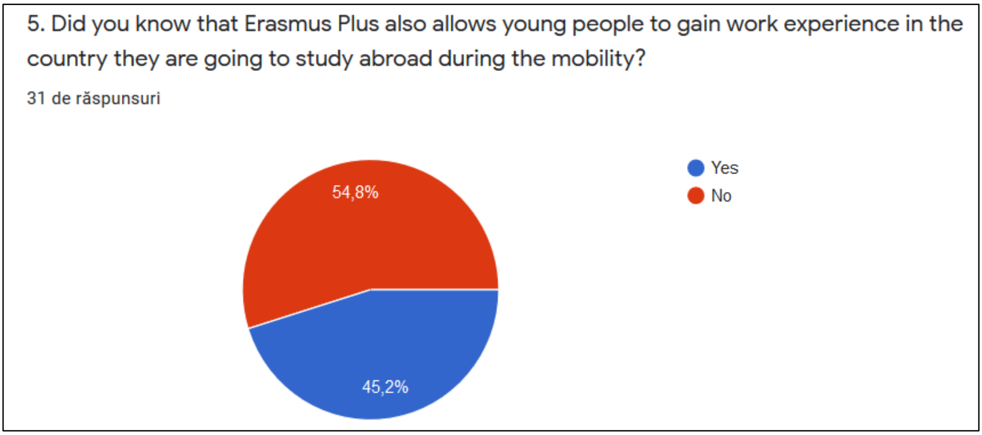
[16] Negrescu, Smith, "Build Back Better."

- experiencing other cultural values
- meeting new people
- studying in English
- the quality of the lectures /accommodation

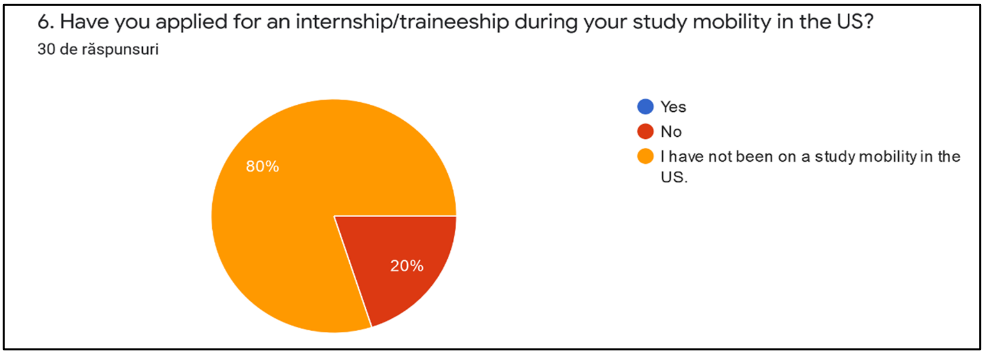
3. Less than half of the respondents knew that Erasmus Plus also allows young people to gain work experience in the country in which they are going to study during the mobility.

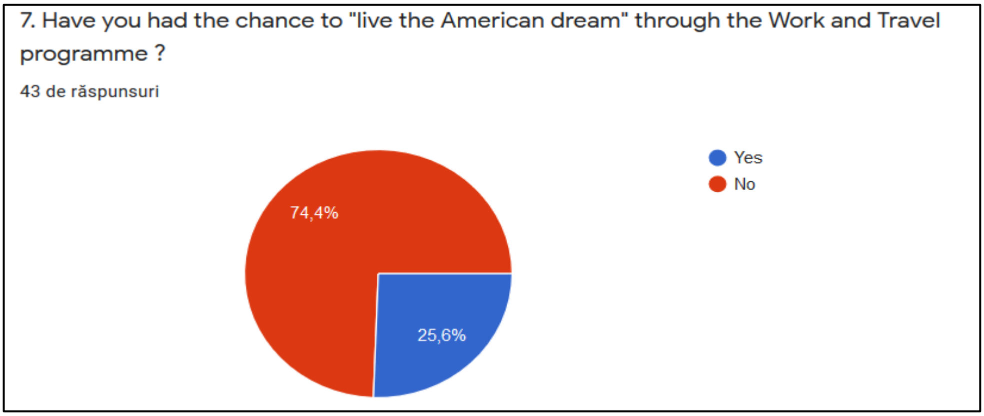


4. Usually, respondents who went to the US did not apply for an internship/traineeship during their study mobility.

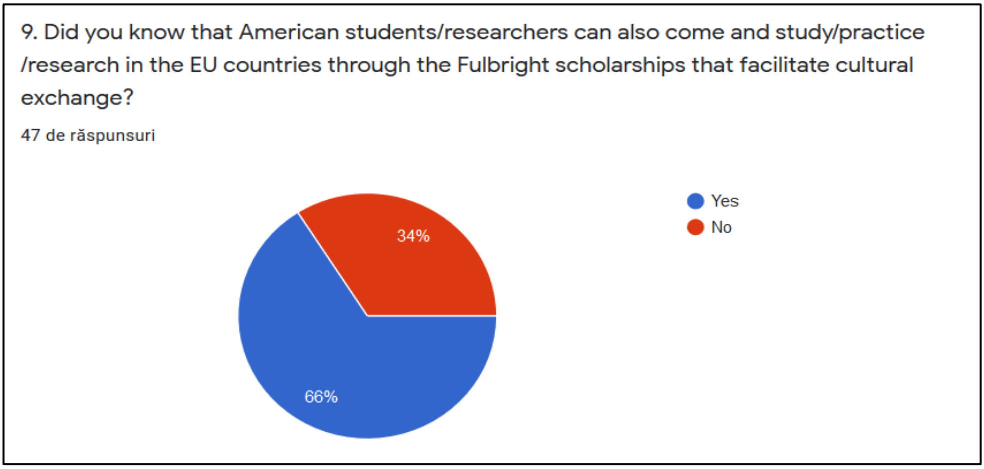


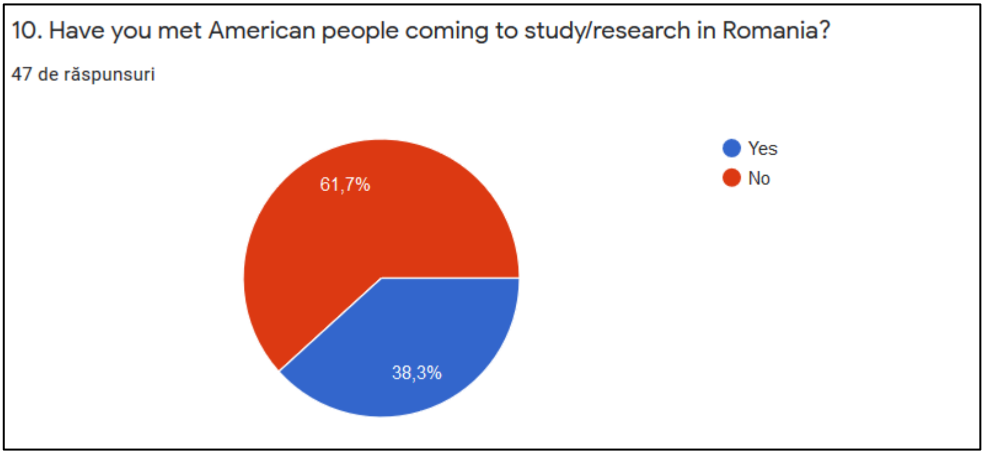
5. Instead of Erasmus, in terms of working mobility, 25.6% of the people said they lived the American dream during a Work and Travel experience in the US.





6. A majority of 66% of the respondents stated they were aware that American students/researchers can also come and study/practice/ research in the EU countries through the Fulbright scholarships that facilitate cultural exchange.





We asked the respondents to offer us an insight into their Work and Travel experience in the US. Some of them repeated the experience of working abroad in America. Besides studying, we understood how job offers also support cross-cultural interactions and learning. Below are some of the comments received.

1. "It was my life's dream to visit places I saw before only on TV, and live the American dream. It was nice that I had the chance to meet people all around the world and practice my English and Spanish but also travel after working the whole summer and this was with the money I earned It was somehow the last experience before getting a real job in my home country and before growing up."
2. "I was in the US for 2 summers. It was an amazing experience, actually I can say that it was my best choice. I liked working with different cultures and experience different kinds of foods, activities, etc. In my first year I worked in retail sales in Michigan, Mackinaw and in the second year in Colorado as a back server. I loved every single moment both times and I am happy that I had the opportunity to visit New York, Chicago, Niagara Falls, Las Vegas, Washington, Boston and Miami."
3. "It was truly an amazing experience, not only for the money, but for the life in the US. Some people were kind, some not, work was a lot more than what I had expected, but visiting famous

landmarks and living the American Dream at the age of 19 changed my life forever."

4. "I lived as an American, I ate American food and I worked with Americans. Even if it felt hard sometimes, it was an awesome experience which I would like to repeat in the future."

7. Only 38.3 % have met American people coming to study/research in Romania.

8. Generally speaking, the impact of Erasmus Plus study mobilities in the US (based on people's own experience there or from what they thought about this study opportunity) was assessed like this:

- 65.9% considered that mobilities opened up new learning horizons.
- 63.6% responded that they taught us about social and cultural values in a different society.
- 40.9% said that they were a good opportunity to make long-lasting friendships and/or scientific cooperation relations.
- 38.6% believed that they helped one realize how Europeans and Americans are perceived by each other.
- they are also believed to be a good incentive for the Europeans and Americans to cooperate in other fields as well.
- last but not least, 34.1% answered that mobilities could set up common education and training standards at global level.

9. As a new, jointly funded Transatlantic Erasmus Program is considered to have a great potential for European and American students, 94.9% of the people said they would support such an initiative. From the answers we received, we concluded that not only policy-makers or members of the academic environment, but also young people in Romania support and are quite optimistic about such an education program.

a. Expectations covered both the professional and the personal dimensions. Students in Romania are interested in qualitative studies, gaining experience and new information, getting to know

people/researchers from the same study area, improving their language skills, but also meeting new people, networking, travelling, being more tolerant, making friends and long-lasting memories.

Someone said that: "If I applied for this program, I would like it to be for a longer period, maybe 1 year or 2. (…) or I expect a large number of students to apply for this. And that I think it is necessary to disseminate information about this scholarship more widely (of course, when the program materializes, as it is only a proposal for the time being). As a student, I expect to improve my knowledge and learn new abilities and information about my interests. Also, I'm very curious to face and react to the new situation and live with unknown people. For me it's very important to feel comfortable and secure with everyone around me."

b. Moreover, respondents seemed to have ambitious expectations that go beyond the study experience and offer the possibility to strengthen transatlantic bilateral ties.
   1. "I would expect this program to be a starting point in establishing the connection and common points between states concerning different life aspects."
   2. "An opportunity to gain more insight regarding the differences between cultures and how that has impacted several areas of work and our day-to-day life. Also, I would expect it to broaden my horizons regarding the educational systems and our way of learning."
   3. "To help students learn and gain experience in the area they want, to help students discover new cultures (this will let them understand "the other" better)."

Conclusions

As transatlantic relations have been put to test in recent years, higher education programs and innovative education models are considered to have significant potential in improving bilateral ties and change soci(et)al and cultural perceptions on both sides, with a broader view of consolidating

and safeguarding the Western community of democratic values, in the current competitive international system.

Erasmus Plus, Erasmus Mundus and Fulbright-Schumann mobilities have offered new possibilities for European and American students to experience learning opportunities and cultural exchanges. The US is one of the EU's Partner countries in education exchange programs.

Until now, Romanian students have not chosen the US as a preferred destination country to study abroad, compared to European states. Nevertheless, a new Transatlantic Erasmus allowing young people to travel, study, work and set up private initiatives has been well received by the Romanian young public so far.

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Iran's Nuclear Strategy and Its Implications for Future Nuclear Negotiations with the US

IOANA CONSTANTIN-BERCEAN

About this perspective

Assessments of foreign policy tend to fall into one of two major camps: either they ascribe to a state's actions all of the characteristics of a unitary actor, in which a decision is made and executed as designed; or they fixate on the minutiae of the internal politics and deal-making that went into the decision, underscoring the complexity of decision-making but often losing track of what results. This is particularly pernicious when it involves the actions of a state with opaque decision-making and where attribution of responsibility is often itself the subject of intense internal political debate and controversy, as is the case with Iran.

This chapter seeks to shed some light on Iranian nuclear decision-making and both to *explain* how decisions are reached and to *identify* the effects of those decisions on the US-Iran relation. This is, in many ways, an essential matter for those interested in understanding how Iran will decide – and what Iran may decide – to do in response to the continued pressure being imposed upon it by US-led international sanctions, especially when previous analysis has proven to be both overly optimistic (that Iran would meekly absorb the costs of US sanctions) and, at times, overly pessimistic (that Iran would withdraw from the nuclear agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action without delay). It is necessary to better understand how Iran reaches its decisions, particularly in the nuclear sphere, in order to have a more accurate understanding of what it may choose to do next.

Iran's nuclear program has shaken geopolitical tensions and it took two US administrations to formulate a policy designed to keep Iran away

from a nuclear weapon, while academics have debated the merits of the existing scholarship in helping configure a sound response to the regime's plans. It took two US administrations, more than a decade of intense nuclear negotiations, one Interim Agreement[1] and many other in-betweens until the conclusion of the JCPOA, on July 14, 2015.

An important observation must be made here about the difference between this research's approach on Iranian strategies and that of other scholars who have also treated this topic. The view that Iran's past influences its current posture is not entirely novel and it has been previously highlighted; the idea has even shaped the thinking of some Western policymakers, including former US president Barack Obama, in a 2015 interview with *The New York Times*: "Part of the psychology of Iran is rooted in past experiences, the sense that their country was undermined, that the United States or the West meddled first in their democracy and then in supporting the Shah and then in supporting Iraq and Saddam during that extremely brutal war. So part of what I've told my team is we have to distinguish between the ideologically driven, offensive Iran and the defensive Iran that feels vulnerable and sometimes may be reacting because they perceive that as the only way that they can avoid repeats of the past."[2]

To understand which options would work and how the US can best tackle the challenge posed by the Iranian nuclear program, practitioners must first and foremost understand how the Iranians think about their nuclear program. But few have attempted to map out how the Iranian political system translates into the security realm in general and nuclear decision-making in particular. This is in part due to the complexity of Iranian political and security ecosystems and the difficulty of fully capturing their inner workings because of the limited information available to researchers in the open source. This paper explores Iranian nuclear decision-making and its implications for US efforts to keep the Islamic Republic away from the bomb. To this end, this paper seeks to answer the following questions: What

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1 United States Institute of Peace, "The Interim Nuclear Deal," June 11, 2015, https://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/interim-nuclear-deal.

2 Thomas Friedman, "Iran and the Obama Doctrine," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/06/opinion/thomas-friedman-the-obama-doctrine-and-iran-interview.html.

drives Iran's nuclear thinking? Which key power centers draw the contours of the country's nuclear policy?

Methodology

The basis for this paper consists of a number of semi-structured interviews conducted in 2017 and 2021 with fieldwork conducted in Austria, France, Romania, United States, Spain, Turkey, Qatar and Oman, but it also analyzes open sources and academic papers regarding the nuclear negotiations between the Islamic Republic and the Great Powers, referred to in the literature as the P5+1 group (US, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China and Germany). These interviews complement my personal examination of existing secondary and primary sources. As such, this paper relies on Iranian primary and secondary sources, as well as US and international assessments of the Iranian nuclear program and intentions (including unclassified or declassified US government documents and intelligence assessments and reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency), media reporting, and a comprehensive scholarly literature and think tank reports. Iranian sources considered include publications on the Iranian nuclear program (such as Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's memoir and publications on the JCPOA by negotiators) and news reports from key Iranian state – affiliated outlets.

Main concepts of Iranian strategic thinking

There are three concepts that will be referred to in the following: *deterrence*, *self-reliance* and *asymmetric warfare*.

Deterrence is the practice of discouraging or restraining someone – in world politics, usually a nation-state – "from taking unwanted actions, such as an armed attack. It involves an effort to stop or prevent an action, as opposed to the closely related but distinct concept of "compellence," which is an effort to force an actor to do something."[3]

[3] Michael J. Mazarr, "Understanding Deterrence," in *Deterrence in the 21st Century – Insights from Theory and Practice*, eds. Frans Osinga and Tim Sweijs (Hague: Springer, 2021), 15.

The US intelligence community's assessments of Iran's nuclear thinking today highlight a continuity in the pre- and post-revolution periods. Iran's historical experiences have largely framed the country's security narrative, threat perceptions, and policy responses to specific crises and challenges. Iranian officials often refer to such events as the Iran-Iraq War in international fora to explain their behavior. The war highlighted Iran's vulnerability and the extent and significance of its conventional shortcomings.[4] After the war, Tehran gradually scaled back its efforts to export its revolution. As its foreign policy goals shifted, Iran's national security strategy also became more defensive. Iranian military strategists began to pay more attention to the principles of modern maneuver warfare, such as combined and joint operations. In the mid-1990s, there was even talk about merging the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) with the regular military, the Artesh,[5] to alleviate the command and control-related problems of having two parallel military services operating in tandem. Iran's military capabilities still lagged behind its doctrine, but by the end of the decade, its forces were gradually evolving into professional, Western-style militaries.[6] Moreover, the 9/11 attacks and US military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan led Tehran to reconsider the trajectory of its armed forces. The regional security environment had changed drastically. Ba'athist Iraq and Taliban Afghanistan – two of Iran's main rivals – were no longer a threat. But the US suddenly had troops positioned along both its western and eastern flanks. This confluence of events, coupled with rumblings in Washington about opportunities for regime change, led Tehran to reassess its national security strategy. Iran's armed forces began to tailor their strategies specifically to counter the perceived American threat.[7]

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[4] Ariane Tabatabai and Annie Tracy Samuel, "What the Iran-Iraq War Tells Us about the Future of the Iran Nuclear Deal," *International Security* 42, no. 1 (Summer 2017), https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/what-iran-iraq-war-tells-us-about-future-iran-nuclear-deal.

[5] The Islamic Republic of Iran Army, acronym AJA, simply known as the Iranian Army or Artesh, is the *conventional military* of Iran and part of Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

[6] Michael Connell, "Iran's Military Doctrine," The United States Institute of Peace, October 11, 2016, https://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/irans-military-doctrine.

[7] Connell, "Iran's Military Doctrine."

In an extremely rare interview with a news outlet in fall 2019 (and one of his last exchanges with the press), then IRGC-Quds Force commander, Qassem Soleimani, also noted the importance of the 1991 Gulf War and the post-9/11 US military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq as key in shaping Iranian threat perceptions and views of US power: "Following Saddam's attack against Kuwait in 1991 and subsequently, America's invasion and Saddam's defeat, a military deposit formed in our region, which led to the deployment of U.S. forces. But since 9/11, due to the two heavy invasions that America led (of Afghanistan and Iraq), nearly 40 percent of the armed forces at America's disposal directly entered our region and, later, during this time and due to the replacements and changes that have occurred, even led to the presence of the reserves and the National Guards, meaning that more than 60 percent of America's military entered our region."[8]

As a result, Tehran designed a doctrine based on deterrence, which sought to raise the costs of targeting the nation through mostly unconventional means and force multipliers such as its missile capability.[9] In the event that deterrence would fail and the US initiated a military effort aimed at regime change, Iran would opt for a war of attrition: "The country's military doctrine defies simple categorization into offensive, defensive, or deterrent models. It is designed to deter adversaries and retaliate if deterrence fails."[10] As the Iranians see it, if their country is to repel potential future aggression, it can only do so using its own unconventional capabilities. As the wars of the past centuries (going back to the 18th century) have shown, the country cannot rely on treaties and agreements, international laws and institutions, or great powers' assurances to secure itself.

Self-reliance. According to Hans Morgenthau's realist principles, the concept of power or "of interest defined in terms of power"[11] makes political

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8 "گفت‌وگو با سرلشکر قاسم سلیمانی" [Interview with Major General Qassem Soleimani], *Tasnim*, October 1, 2019, https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/.

9 Connell, "Iran's Military Doctrine."

10 Erik A. Olson, "Iran's Path Dependent Military Doctrine," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (2016): 63, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26271505?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

11 Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 262.

leaders "think and act in terms of interest defined as power."[12] Hence, in terms of self-reliance, the Iranian fundamental assumptions about military power include the idea that the country must remain a force to be reckoned with in its region and the importance of deterrence, as well as the notions of self-reliance, the nation's ability to stand on its own two feet to safeguard its security and interests, and a severe distrust of the international order and the great powers.[13] As Iranian officials often remind their US, European, and Arab counterparts – and as we will see later on – the Iranians believe that their country's "security cannot and is not provided by or purchased"[14] from others. In other words, unlike some of its neighbors, which outsource their security, Tehran tries to provide for its own security and defense needs and has placed an emphasis on building capacity indigenously. This domestic strategic paradigm was an important driver that stood behind the post-revolution Iranian government decision to resume the nuclear program and to develop an indigenous enrichment program, arguing that they would need to preserve what they claim is their inalienable right[15] to enrich under the NPT.

Asymmetric warfare. The core pillars of Iran's defense thinking lie in its belief that it must deter adversaries from attacking Iranian national and regime interests while ensuring that if deterrence fails, the country is equipped with a means of denying the adversary a win. In the context of deterrence, Iran had sought to develop a nuclear capability while building up its missile and proxy forces. But unable to obtain a nuclear capability and given its security needs stemming from its adversarial relationship with the United States and regional rivalries, the country has adopted a predominantly asymmetric approach to warfare. This allows Iran to compete with nuclear-armed and conventionally superior adversaries, such as the United States and Israel.[16] This strategy was very clearly conveyed through

[12] Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations.*

[13] Interview with Iranian official in Vienna, May 18, 2019.

[14] Ariane Tabatabai, *Nuclear Decision-Making in Iran: Implications for US Nonproliferation Efforts* (New York: Columbia University CGEP, 2020), 19.

[15] Maaike Warnaar, *Iranian Foreign Policy during Ahmadinejad Ideology and Actions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 137.

[16] Connell, "Iran's Military Doctrine."

the message of former Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif: "[Our] view of foreign policy must be a comprehensive one. What has created power for the Islamic Republic is the asymmetric factor. Although other factors of power exist elsewhere. The Islamic Republic has made considerable progress in the material elements of power, but it is still lacking superiority vis-à-vis other regional players in an equation, especially international actors. But where the Islamic Republic has a special advantage is in the Islamic Revolution's discourse, one based on self-reliance and independence."[17]

Iran's security needs and concerns have also led an often isolated and conventionally inferior Iran to seek avoiding direct conflict with these adversaries, instead leveraging non-state actors for deterrence and to assert influence.[18] This view also entails efforts to build various key defense programs, including nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction programs, as well as missile, space, drone, and cyber programs.[19] These programs are all designed to increase the cost of targeting Iran for its adversaries, while lowering the costs associated with deterrence and defense for the country.

The Islamic Republic's domestic nuclear debate

Iran's nuclear program has been a subject of controversy on the international stage for two decades, but the decision-making process and underlying motivations for Iran's actions have often been misunderstood. Often, Iran's actions are viewed solely through one lens: either as a product of internal politics "too complex to understand" or as decisions of one individual, the Supreme Leader. In reality, those extremes do not capture the full picture of Iranian decision-making. A complex web of organizations – including the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches, several

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[17] Ariane Tabatabai and Dina Esfandiary, *Triple-Axis: Iran's Relations with Russia and China* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 182.

[18] Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections – States that Sponsor Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 110-17.

[19] Michael Eisenstadt "Iran's Lengthening Cyber Shadow," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Research Notes 34, July, 28, 2016, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote34_Eisenstadt.pdf.

intelligence organizations, the armed forces (both the IRGC and Artesh) and streamlined through the Supreme National Security Council – engages in a bargaining process in a feedback loop with the supreme leader's office. In terms of order of importance, the office of the supreme leader is the main important body within the chain of structure; the next is the executive branch (including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the civil service of intelligence) and the IRGC, with the legislature and the judiciary playing relatively minor roles.[20]

Each of these organizations is, in turn, divided into a number of different entities. As a result, far from a top-down exercise by a single individual, Iran's decision-making process is, in fact, the outcome of intense feedback loops within and between different power centers. That said, the supreme leader no doubt plays a critical role in framing the national security discourse and forming the framework within which policies are devised and implemented. Hence, the supreme leader's veto power grants him the ability to remove any item he does not wish to see executed from the deliberations agenda – although Khamenei has revealed himself to be reluctant to use his veto power unless he seemingly viewed the matter at hand as absolutely critical, an approach that his successor may or may not adopt.[21]

It must also be underlined that in defining the different ideological factions, the simplified categories of *hard-liner* vs. *moderate* customarily used in the West are unhelpful, as they do not adequately reflect the complex orientations of the Iranian protagonists. A very fit example of this is former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani,[22] who has changed his political views numerous times since 1980 to maintain a hold on power.

Iran's decision-making process on sensitive issues such as its nuclear program can be opaque and hard to dissect. But it is clear that every step Iran has taken so far, from the initial period of "strategic patience"[23] to the more

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[20] Tabatabai, *Nuclear Decision-making in Iran,* 22-23.

[21] Tabatabai, *Nuclear Decision-making in Iran,* 22-23.

[22] Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran: The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2000), 11.

[23] Eric Brewer and Ariane Tabatabai, "Understanding Iran's Nuclear Escalation Strategy," War on the Rocks, December 12, 2019, https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/understanding-irans-nuclear-escalation-strategy/.

aggressive posture of slowly rolling back its JCPOA commitments starting with the end of 2018, has been taken at the highest levels of the regime and with input from key power centers.

Understanding this decision-making process is important for several reasons. Practical considerations make it critical to understand how Iran's policy outputs are shaped in order to identify pressure points in future efforts to curb the Iranian nuclear program in the context of the country dialing down its JCPOA implementation or perhaps even leaving the agreement or the NPT. Moreover, pinpointing the players involved in establishing security policies is key to comprehending what concepts and considerations shape decision makers' calculations. Scholars, policy circles, and media outlets have attempted to shed light on the Iranian political system for decades.[24] And during each major Iranian political event, including presidential and parliamentary elections, charts of the country's political system emerge again.

Iran's nuclear strategy and its impact on negotiations with the United States

After former American President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the JCPOA in May 2018 and started to implement his administration's "maximum pressure campaign"[25] Tehran undertook what it dubbed its "strategic patience"[26] policy. The strategy entailed a continued adherence to the deal by Iran in the hopes that the European Union or the United Kingdom would take steps to undermine America's new hardline Iran policy. However, a year after the US withdrawal from the agreement, it became clear that the EU, while clearly disenchanted by the US approach, was nonetheless unable to effectively counter it. This led Iran to reconsider its own course of action, shifting from a "wait and see"[27] approach to a much

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[24] Buchta, *Who Rules Iran*, 49-54.

[25] Elliott Abrams, "Did the 'Maximum Pressure' Campaign Against Iran Fail?," Council on Foreign Relations, July 12, 2021. https://www.cfr.org/blog/did-maximum-pressure-campaign-against-iran-fail.

[26] Brewer and Tabatabai, "Understanding Iran."

[27] Abrams, "Maximum Pressure."

more assertive one. In announcing its new policy, the former Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani, noted that Iran would begin disengaging from its nuclear commitments under the deal for as long as the other parties to the agreement fail to provide it with what it desires: access to the global financial system and the ability to export its oil.

The Trump administration approach was based on an assessment of the Iranian economy. The theory was that if Trump won re-election and Iran was faced with four more years of intense economic pressure, it would agree to a serious and comprehensive negotiation. That negotiation would include not only Iran's nuclear program but also its support for regional proxy groups and its missile program. However, Trump did not win a second term in office and the incumbent US President, Joe Biden, declared that his administration is willing to restore the JCPOA.

Preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons has been a bipartisan US national security priority ever since 2002. The JCPOA, concluded by the Obama administration in 2015, was a major step toward that objective, effectively blocking Iran's pathways to nuclear weapons in the near and medium terms, and providing a promising platform for achieving a permanent solution in the future. However, since May 2018, the dispute between the US and Iran has been at an impasse. Despite mounting economic pressures, there are no signs that Iran will give in to US demands. The American strategy intended to force Iran to accept stricter nuclear limits and constrain its behavior in other ways has determined Iran to resume its nuclear program in the near term, which might not have happened if the US had remained party to the JCPOA.

The newly elected Iranian President, Ebrahim Raisi, pledged to pursue "smart engagement"[28] in order to lift sanctions on Iran during his August 5, 2021 inauguration speech. Raisi characterized the US sanctions as oppressive and said his government would support "a diplomatic plan that achieves this goal,"[29] likely referring to efforts to restore US and Iranian

[28] Kelsey Davenport, Julia Masterson and Sang-Min Kim, "Raisi Pledges Return to Nuclear Talks," Arms Control Association, August 11, 2021, https://www.armscontrol.org/blog/2021-08/ p4-1-iran-nuclear-deal-alert.

[29] Fars News Agency, "Rayeesi: Pressures, Sanctions Not to Dissuade Iran from Pursuing Rights," August 5, 2021, https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14000514000683/Rayeesi-Pressres-Sancins-N-Dissade-Iran-frm-Prsing-Righs.

compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal. He also said that Iran's nuclear program is "completely peaceful"[30] and reiterated the official line that "Iran has placed a religious ban on nuclear weapons."[31]

Talks to restore the JCPOA have remained stalled since Raisi's election in June but will likely resume before the end of 2021, according to EU officials.[32] EU foreign policy chief and coordinator of the P4+1 group (China, France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom), Enrique Mora, attended the inauguration and met with the Iranian Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, explaining his gesture by saying that it is "crucial to engage diplomatically with the new administration"[33] and to directly pass along messages. However, rhetorically, the Raisi administration appears poised to take a harder line on the negotiations and may try to leverage its nuclear violations for greater concessions from the US.

It is unclear whether, when talks resume, the United States and Iran will meet directly. During the prior six rounds, Mora served as an intermediary during the indirect talks. Raisi is, however, prepared to engage with the European parties to the deal. During an August 9, 2021 phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron, Raisi reportedly emphasized that the United States and the other parties to the JCPOA should honor their commitments under the nuclear deal. He also said that Iran's "rights and interest"[34] must be ensured in any plan to restore the JCPOA.

Nevertheless, the Biden administration is considering tightening sanctions on Iranian oil sales to China to deter Tehran from abandoning talks on the restoration of the nuclear deal and incentivize it to rejoin the accord. Under this option, the US would impose fresh sanctions on the shipping networks that help export an estimated 1 million barrels a day from Iran to its clients, particularly to China. The action is one of many similar legal actions or new designations that aim to aggressively enforce the current

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30 Fars News Agency, "Rayeesi."

31 Fars News Agency, "Rayeesi."

32 Davenport, Masterson and Kim, "Raisi Pledges Return."

33 H. Kaviani, "تاکید اتحادیه اروپا بر اهمیت ارتباط مستقیم دیپلماتیک با دولت جدید ایران" ["EU Emphasizes the Importance of Direct Diplomatic Relations with the New Iranian Government"], *Radio Farda*, 2021, https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran-new-president-raisi-meets-with-some-foreign-officials/31395486.html.

34 Davenport, Masterson and Kim, "Raisi Pledges Return."

sanction regime on Iran's oil and shipping industries. Finally, the US is assessing whether the deal's benefits still outweigh the costs of Iran's nuclear program's ongoing gains. While its desire for further talks indicates Biden's support for rejoining the deal and that benefits currently trump costs, the Spokesman for the State Department Ned Price stated on July 14 that "this process is not indefinite (...) there will come a point where our calculus will change."[35]

However, ultimately, Iran's fundamental decision about whether or not to negotiate with the United States and its partners and the regime's top and bottom lines will be determined by the system and likely will not change regardless of whether talks resume during President Hassan Rouhani's tenure or after his successor has assumed power. Any difference will likely manifest itself in the conduct of the negotiations and rapport with the United States and other counterparts, how effectively the Iranian delegation negotiating with the US and its partners can navigate its own country's politics, and the specifics left to that team's discretion.

Conclusions and implications

Bargaining within Iran's key power centers shapes its nuclear decision-making, which results from its consensus-building effort. The process remains fairly opaque and so do key components of it. This makes it difficult to adequately understand Iran's nuclear intentions fully and to separate stated objectives and policies from the leadership's actual intent. Similarly, the complexity and opacity of the Iranian nuclear decision-making process makes it more difficult to anticipate Iranian actions and reactions to US decisions. This entails some implications for US policy toward Iran going forward.

First, unlike what is sometimes assumed, key nuclear decisions are not typically made by a single organization within the system. Instead, a green light from the relevant organs within the system is needed to move forward with a particular course of action (though minor technical actions

[35] U. S. Department of State, "Department Press Briefing-July 14, 2021," https://www.state.gov/ briefings/ department-press-briefing-july-14-2021/.

may not need a full consensus-based decision involving all bodies). Hence, hardliners, for example, are not able to play spoiler by taking steps outside the JCPOA generally frowned upon by the rest of the system. This has positive and negative implications for the United States. The high bar for system consensus on key and often-controversial actions complicates efforts to change Iranian nuclear behavior and to affect its calculus. For example, should the system come to the conclusion that it must acquire a nuclear weapon, US sticks and carrots would have a limited impact on Iran's calculus.

Second, and relatedly, the bargaining process provides an opening for the US to seek concessions from Iran. Just as when the system agrees upon and settles on a course of action, it is difficult to overturn that consensus, the bargaining process and the disagreements among power centers afford the United States levers it can utilize to curb certain components of Iran's nuclear program. The system has broadly settled on the need for a nuclear program, domestic enrichment, and a certain level of R&D (Research and Development). Hence, it is unlikely that the country will make concessions on these core tenets of its nuclear program. However, despite stated objectives of reaching one million Separative Work Units (SWU)[36] Iran still does not have clear redlines on what is permissible within those confines – allowing the US to seek concessions from it.

The US can develop provisions while requiring technically significant concessions from Iran that are deemed less politically sensitive and visible in the country in exchange for high-profile offerings from the West. Also, the US can impose restrictions on the use of aircraft and parts to strictly civilian uses and can also require Iran to extend JCPOA sunsets (expiration dates) significantly, as this is an important area of concern for Washington. Similarly, restrictions in R&D are typically easier to impose than those on enrichment, which has become a high-profile issue in Iran (in large part due to government propaganda). Finally, leveraging Iranian political statements to codify them and impose more limits on the proliferation-sensitive aspects of the Iranian nuclear program can increase their political viability in the country. This can include the addition of limits

[36] The SWU is the measure of the work expended during uranium enrichment.

on Iran's missile activities, which can leverage existing statements about self-imposed limits of 2,000 km on the range of the country's missiles.

The future of JCPOA and Iran's nuclear program are yet to be determined, with domestic factors, US decisions, and international events affecting their trajectory. But for the foreseeable future, Iran's nuclear program will remain a national security challenge for the US. Understanding how Iran makes decisions on the future of its nuclear program will be key to tailoring US policy toward Iran's nuclear activities and American nonproliferation interests. In this context, the bargaining process shaping the contours of Iran's nuclear policy and approach to negotiations may be more indicative than the position of any single entity within the system. Perhaps due to this, Iran has been and remains reluctant to fully and indefinitely deny itself any single option, including those it may not be pursuing at the present moment.

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Transatlantic Relations Post-COVID-19 – Ensuring Democratic Resilience?

TANA ALEXANDRA FOARFĂ

Introduction

The transatlantic partnership has had a long-history tradition of over seven decades, being the most solid common commitment to provide the normative grounds of the liberal international order. Democracy, freedom, rule of law, human rights and open trade were the key principles of the two great powers (the European Union and the USA) and the common ground on which they relied to build partnerships, projects and steer multilateral organizations such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), WTO (World Trade Organization) or IMF (International Monetary Fund). Despite several differences in their approach, the relationship of the two actors has always been solid, with important common projects in the fields of defense, the promotion of common values and commercial activity. Nevertheless, the arrival of President Trump represented a shift in American foreign policy, one more inclined towards protectionism and away from the multilateralism principle that governs the international order. A series of political decisions and actions altered the image of the United States as a normative power, bred uncertainty in the prospects of its relationship with the European Union and raised questions across the European Union about the potential of the US to steer global leadership.

This is the context in which the COVID-19 outbreak emerged in 2020, causing the largest economic and social shock world economies have faced. Countries were forced to take restrictive measures, the working environment experienced unprecedented changes, public health systems were overburdened and children and youth needed to adapt to a new educational environment. One year into the COVID-19 outbreak, we still witness and

discover more the far-reaching effects of this all-encompassing and complex crisis. What is certain is that the pandemic represented a disruptive element that has created a new reality. This new reality is more prominent when reflected in a geopolitical context, as the recovery after the pandemic has become the utmost priority of great powers. The speed and success of the recovery will also determine the speed in the race towards leadership on the international scene. This paper aims to explore the ways in which the European Union and the United States have tackled the pandemic and the priorities set for their recovery. The research aims to explore what are the common grounds on which the transatlantic alliance can build bridges following the pandemic. The transatlantic relationship shall be analyzed from the perspective of the European Union, currently focusing on a full recovery and strengthening its resilience in several areas. Given the different dimensions that recovery implies, the paper will focus on the European Union's geopolitical dimension of resilience and will explore the areas that will foster a solid transatlantic relationship. Are there solutions, amid structural trends, points of contention and convergence, for the transatlantic alliance to make solid steps forward?

Transatlantic relations: turning points and the Trump effect

Obama's foreign policy gave high hopes of long-term solid cooperation between the two powers due to his inclusive vision of "renewing American leadership" in a "multi-partner world".[1] Nevertheless, in 2017, Donald Trump became the 45th U.S. President and took an opposite approach to foreign policy. He put to test the solidity of the transatlantic partnership due to his "America First" concept that emphasized US national interests as being the primary goal and rejecting the common principles of the international order such as the important role of multilateral organizations, the aim and utility of having allies and building partnerships and the complex challenges that need to be addressed when developing trade or security policies.

[1] Barack Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2007, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2007-07-01/renewing-american-leadership.

There are several turning points in the Brussels-Washington relationship during the Trump era that caused frictions and concerns about the viability of the partnership. They can be structured around three main issues:

- the security dimension
- multilateralism and democratic principles
- the economic and trade dimension

The security dimension

One of the most solid pillars of the transatlantic cooperation is without doubt the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Since its creation, NATO has been a great and steady international achievement following the end of the Second World War. Since then, the organization has had to constantly search for a role that can stimulate its presence and further evolution. According to Donald Trump, the organization had become "obsolete" and in 2017, during his NATO visit in Brussels, he clearly stated an explicit shift in the US position and traditional commitment within NATO: he conditioned the immediate US intervention in case of a situation that activates the mutual defense principle (also known as Article 5) on whether the EU allies 'fulfilled their [financial] obligations",[2] referring thus to the 2% target of national GDP for defense spending. Furthermore, in 2018, during the NATO Summit in Brussels, he also proposed[3] that NATO members should double their military expenditure and thus increase it to 4%. This rather *transactional* approach towards foreign and security policy, rooted in the same principle that America's interests should come first, started to worry EU leaders and made them analyze whether the EU should gain autonomy in terms of security capacity and capability, thus diminishing its reliance on the United States. While Trump's remarks verbally stated in

[2] David E. Sanger, Maggie Haberman, "Donald Trump Sets Conditions for Defending NATO Allies against Attack," *The New York Times*, July 20, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/us/politics/ donald-trump-issues.html.

[3] Fabrice Pothier, Alexander Vershbow, "NATO and Trump: The Case for a New Transatlantic Bargain," The Atlantic Council, June 2017, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NATO_ and_Trump_web_0623.pdf.

speeches or delivered in writing via Twitter pointed to very clear position, they did not represent the overall US intentions and soon afterwards, concerned about some statements in *The New York Times* that Trump was allegedly raising the threat to withdraw the United States from NATO in private bilateral conversations, the US House of Representatives approved with an overwhelming majority the NATO Support Act,[4] which clearly prohibited the withdrawal of the United States from the alliance without Senate approval.

Multilateralism and democratic principles

Back in 2016, the EU experienced an episode highly unlikely to be repeated in the foreseeable future: the exit of a member state from the European Union. When the Brexit referendum results announced that the UK would leave the EU, European leaders issued statements expressing their disappointment, their sadness or sometimes frustration. On the other side of the Atlantic, then-presidential candidate Donald Trump stated that the Brexit referendum results were "a great victory",[5] a statement that was generally interpreted as being the first Eurosceptic element brought forward by a US president and, if maintained during his potential term, a trend that could clearly damage the transatlantic alliance. If one considers the position expressed in the previous section, this interpretation of Brexit being a victory was aligned with the state supremacy principle promoted by Trump, but it also gave a hint of the potential economic and trade prospects with the United Kingdom. This last priority was also confirmed several days after Donald Trump's inauguration, when he met former British Prime Minister Theresa May and promised that the US would negotiate a free trade deal with the UK as soon as the country left the EU.

This attitude towards the European Union, previously much encouraged towards further integration by former US presidents, reflected

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[4] Congress of the United States, "H.R.676-NATO Support Act," January 23, 2019, https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/676.

[5] Ewen MacAskill, "Donald Trump Hails EU Referendum Result as He Arrives in UK," *The Guardian*, June 24, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jun/24/donald-trump-hails-eu-referendum-result-as-he-arrives-in-uk%3E.

on other core organizations that constitute the multilateral world in place since 1945. Trump's administration disengaged from the United Nations, described the World Trade Organization as "completely inadequate" and withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Furthermore, Trump withdrew the US from the historical Paris climate agreement, a commitment to fight climate change signed by more than 190 countries in 2015. Therefore, the position of the United States as international leader and great power started to fade away and launched a thorough discussion among EU leaders on the capacity of the European Union to solidify its role as major driver of the multilateralist agenda. In this sense, France and Germany launched in September 2019 the *Alliance of Multilateralism*,[6] an informal network of countries united in their conviction that a rules-based multilateral order and cooperation is the only reliable guarantee for international stability and peace.

The economic and trade dimension

The unilateral and transactional approach promoted by Trump was also reflected in trade policy. Trump's administration defined the global trading system as "deeply flawed" as it reduced the US economic growth and competition, grounded on "outdated and imbalanced trade agreements" such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and on an "failing" World Trade Organization. Thus, his goal was to exclusively focus, once again, on US interests, revise trade agreements and enforce stricter US trade laws. The protectionist approach went hand in hand with his proposal to impose high tariffs on several products, rather than reinforce cooperation in a multilateral trade system and appeal to trade settlements at the WTO in case of discriminatory treatments. This tariff increase on steel and aluminum imports affected the EU and consequently the EU responded with retaliatory tariffs on selected US products. Thus, Trump created a so-called "trade war"[7] in the largest bilateral global trade flow.

[6] Alliance of Multilateralism official website: https://multilateralism.org/the-alliance/, accessed July 15, 2020.

[7] Reuters, "Trump Tweets: 'Trade Wars Are Good, and Easy to Win,'" https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-trump/trump-tweets-trade-wars-are-good-and-easy-to-win-idUSKCN1GE1E9, March 2 2018.

The Trump effect on the European Union

From its biggest partner and friend after World War II, the European Union publicly became a foe for the United States, following Trump's declaration in 2018 ahead of his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.[8] This statement, together with the elements previously described, left a significant mark on the European Union's internal and external policy.

First, the Trump rhetoric fueled the illiberal trend already growing in Central and Eastern Europe. This came to an already existing wave of criticism towards the EU, propelled by the populist power that determined the result of the Brexit referendum. This event made the European Union struggle internally to have the global voice and claim of calling itself the leading normative power. In fact, only few days after the results of the Brexit vote in 2016, the EU released the EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy,[9] a document that was meant to identify a role for the European Union post-Brexit, with one less Member State, with a significant financial contribution to the defense policy now absent and with complex hybrid security challenges ahead. Already back then, the EU was announcing the need to achieve "strategic autonomy" from the United States and it also launched, one year later, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), together with a European Commission proposal to establish a European Defense Fund.

Second, Trump's ideology constituted a wake-up call for the European Union that there is an opportunity to play a more decisive role on the international scene. So far, the limits of the European Union's functioning and competencies always have placed the EU second after the United States, as the decision-making process is complex and it leads to a lack of capacity to act promptly and to speak with one voice. While these constraints are still

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8 Jeff Glor, "'I Think the European Union Is a Foe', Trump Said ahead of Putin Meeting in Helsinki," CBS News, July 15, 2018, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-interview-cbs-news-european-union-is-a-foe-ahead-of-putin-meeting-in-helsinki-jeff-glor/.

9 European External Action Service, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy," June 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/ archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf.

present, US policy during the Trump era forced the European Union to actively search for a role and push forward, more insistently this time, the enlargement process of the EU, the transition from unanimity to qualified majority voting or a more precise identification of areas in which the EU is a champion.

The COVID-19 pandemic

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic constituted a symmetrical global shock, but with asymmetric responses across the world. It represented a test of speed, strategy and efficiency for each government that was racing against an increasing death toll from a virus for which there was no existing cure.

The new type of virus, SARS-CoV-2, was first identified in China, in the city of Wuhan, where it caused a real outbreak in December 2019. Shortly afterwards, the virus spread rapidly across China and passed the borders, isolated cases already reaching the Union in January 2020. The gravity of the situation was not really felt in Europe until the end of February, when Italy's COVID-19 cases exploded, and almost all Member States witnessed an alarming increase of cases. In March 2020, all European Union countries were facing a pandemic that had already claimed countless lives, driven medical systems to exhaustion and forced Member States to take drastic measures to close borders, restricting one of the 4 essential freedoms of movement on the continent.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the spread started later, in April, but with very high spread rates in densely populated urban centers. While the European Union preferred a very strict solution to limit free movement in order to contain the virus, President Trump did not proceed immediately with COVID-19 measures, instead he preferred to downplay the real gravity of the pandemic and focused on a discourse that assured the citizens that the virus would soon disappear. Borders were closed globally, not only for one's own citizens, and they also created barriers to travel or international trade, the world's largest economies partially shutting down in order to contain the virus. The global economy experienced a more severe downturn than the one generated by the financial crisis in 2008. Stock indices registered

increased volatility, unemployment rate increased and global supply chains broke down or even collapsed.

This led to a competition between great powers to recover faster, to seize the opportunity to become a leader after a global order that suffered a reset following the pandemic. China was delayed from its quest to become the top leader in technology, Japan and India were severely affected and slowed down the pace of developing closer Indo-Pacific alliances with the United States, Russia's fragile health care system was impacted at a time when Russian President Vladimir Putin was under pressure due to declining living standards and a weakened currency. Furthermore, tensions in the transatlantic relationship between the European Union and the United States have risen, following the rupture caused by former President Donald Trump's foreign affairs policy that left no room for dialogue between the two continents throughout his term. NATO also faced weakened military readiness, as the Alliance halted military exercises. The World Health Organization failed to respond properly to the pandemic, damaging the principle of multilateralism that was a cornerstone of the global order.

This great-power competition translated into measures meant to increase the soft power of the main actors: donations of medical equipment towards developing countries, a race to develop the much expected vaccine, distribution of vaccines towards developing countries. But most importantly, it led to a principle quickly understood by the main actors on the global stage: whoever recovers faster will increase its chances to become a world leader. Economic recovery from the pandemic thus became a priority for both the EU and the United States, following President Joe Biden's election. The following sections will present a summary of the economic response of the European Union and the United States to the pandemic.

The response of the United States

January and February 2020 were marked by a general campaign of minimizing the impact of the virus in the United States. Former President Trump praised the Chinese government for the containment of the virus within their country and reassured the Americans that the virus was similar

to a flu and would not last for long. Nevertheless, the cases rapidly multiplied in March and consequently serious measures needed to be taken in order to handle the pandemic that was already gripping the United States. Therefore, travel restrictions, border closures, guidelines for safety and protection begin to emerge, together with $2,2 trillion from the Federal Reserve needed for tackling of the pandemic in form of direct cash payments to citizens, funding for hospitals, and loans for companies. The Trump administration preferred to transfer the responsibility to contain the virus towards decentralized state authorities, stating that this flexibility would allow local governments to offer customized solutions.[10] Nevertheless, critics[11] argue that this decision was taken while having in mind the presidential elections and wishing to avoid responsibility and accountability for the consequences of the pandemic. Unfortunately, this led to major differences and uncoordinated measures across the country, as the public health system was unevenly equipped and the local authorities took different restrictive measures.

Following the election of President Biden, the new administration presented in January 2021 the "American Rescue Plan",[12] focused on the economic recovery of the United States through investments, job creation, outlining the long-term goals of combating the climate crisis and tackling racial inequality and, last but not least, "building back better than before". The priorities of this plan include a national vaccination program that will also improve testing and tracing and overcome supply shortage, so that health disparities no longer exist; direct financial support for American families, as well as assistance with housing, nutrition, childcare and healthcare, together with more long-term solutions that will increase minimum wage and extend unemployment insurance; investments and help

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[10] Cameron Peters, "A Detailed Timeline of All the Ways Trump Failed to Respond to the Coronavirus," Vox, June 8 2020, https://www.vox.com/2020/6/8/21242003/trump-failed-coronavirus-response.

[11] Drew Altman, "Understanding the US Failure on Coronavirus," *BMJ* (September 2020): 370, https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m3417.

[12] The White House, "President Biden Announces American Rescue Plan," January 20, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/legislation/2021/01/20/president-biden-announces-american-rescue-plan/.

for small businesses and protecting the rights and jobs of the essential workers; consolidated technology infrastructure in order to avoid breaches of government data systems.

The response of the European Union

Contrary to the approach taken during the 2008 financial crisis, the EU mobilized resources to support the Member States economically, while at global level a race was ongoing for the development and access to medical equipment and, in particular, for a vaccine that would permanently halt the pandemic.

As the year 2020 was governed by the keyword "lockdown", the EU promoted through the discourse of the EU leaders the concept of solidarity. Several examples include the joint procurement for the purchase of medical equipment and COVID-19 PCR detection tests,[13] a strategic reserve ("RescEU") of medical equipment,[14] increased access to Remdesivir,[15] the first authorized drug for treatment against COVID-19 at European level, facilitated access to medical equipment from non-EU countries by temporarily exempting customs duties and VAT on imports.[16]

From an economic point of view, the EU continued to promote the discourse of not repeating the mistakes of the past. Solid financial resources were mobilized to erase from everyone's memories the experience of austerity measures taken during the 2008 financial crisis. Thus, 800 million

[13] European Commission, "Coronavirus: Commission Bid to Ensure Supply of Personal Protective Equipment for the EU Proves Successful," March 24, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/ detail/en/ip_20_523.

[14] European Commission, "COVID-19: Commission Creates First Ever RescEU Stockpile of Medical Equipment," March 19, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ro/ip_20_476.

[15] European Commission, "European Commission Secures EU Access to Remdesivir for Treatment of COVID-19," July 29, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1416.

[16] European Commission, "Covid-19: Commission Puts Forward Taxation and Customs Measures to Support Access to More Affordable Equipment, Vaccines and Testing Kits," November 28, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/news/covid-1-commission-puts-forward-taxation-and-customs-measures-support-access-more-affordable-equipment-vaccines-and-testing-kits_en.

euros were made available for public health emergencies through the European Union Solidarity Fund.[17] Several financial instruments were created: SURE was available for Member States to help enterprises support their employees during the pandemic,[18] and the €37 billion Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative.[19]

Due to the complexity and magnitude of the pandemic impact, the EU came up with a tailored response and proposed in May 2020 over €2000 billion in European funding for the future of the Union. In addition to more than €1 trillion in the Multiannual Financial Framework, the European Commission proposed the "Next Generation EU," a €750 billion recovery plan.[20] The recovery plan is based entirely on the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the largest financial instrument in the history of the European Union, worth €672.5 billion.[21]

A potential common Transatlantic goal: resilience

At this point, it is interesting to note that both actors refer to two essential terms when they outline the economic and social future after the COVID-19 pandemic: recovery and resilience. While the recovery concept is quite understandable given the pandemic, *resilience* is the more interesting reference. The concept of resilience has become the main goal of European policies and the main solution to the consequences of the crisis caused by the

[17] European Parliament, "Coronavirus: EU Countries to Get Help from Solidarity Fund," https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20200323STO75625/coronavirus-eu-countries-to-get-help-from-solidarity-fund.

[18] European Parliament, "Covid-19's Economic Impact: 100 Billion Euro to Keep People in Jobs," November 6, 2020, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/priorities/eu-response-to-coronavirus/2020041STO77205/covid-1-s-economic-impact-U100-billion-to-keep-people-in-jobs.

[19] European Parliament, "Coronavirus: Parliament Approves €37 Billion Crisis Response," March 27, 2020, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/economy/20200323STO75617/covid-19-parliament-approves-EU37-billion-crisis-response.

[20] European Parliament, "Covid-19: The EU Plan for the Economic Recovery," December 15, 2020, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/economy/20200513STO79012/covid-19-the-eu-plan-for-the-economic-recovery.

[21] European Parliament, "COVID-19: Deal to Give Go-ahead to the New Recovery and Resilience Facility," December 18, 2020, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/ro/press-room/20201211PR32/covid-1-deal-to-give-go-ahead-to-the-new-recovery-and-resilience-facility.

SARS-CoV-2 virus. For the United States, while not explicitly mentioning the term, President Biden announced the American Rescue Plan which will "build back better than before". This concept has had an interesting evolution in European Union policy-making.

Undisputedly, every citizen that heard or read about the EU Recovery plan imagined a more resilient Europe in various ways. This is perfectly normal, as the term *resilience* does not have a clear definition, but rather is interpreted according to the reference field, context, and level of ambition that accompanies it. The noun *resilience* is derived from the Latin noun *resilientia*, which means *comeback, recover or rebound*.[22] According to the field in which it has been used, the term took on different valid meanings. From a scientific point of view, the technical meaning has been associated with the concept of elasticity and with the idea that resilient materials are those that have qualities flexible enough not to cause excessive vibrations.[23] Juha Vuori explains in detail the creation of the notion of "ecological resilience" by Crawford S. Holling in 1970, which moved away from the scientific view of resilience that a system has a single point of equilibrium and that resilience is the time required for a system to return to its steady state after a disturbance.[24] Vuori explains the fact that Holling believed that a system is much more complex, with more points for equilibrium, which makes it capable to withstand several changes.[25] Thus, resilience becomes an adaptation to inevitable changes. In psychology, resilience involves the ability to recover easily and quickly after an unfortunate event.[26]

The use of the term in politics is much more abstract, and based on an analysis of the speech delivered by President of the European

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[22] Peter Rogers, "The Etymology and Genealogy of a Contested Concept", in *The Routledge Handbook of International Resilience*, eds. David Chandler, Jon Coaffee (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 13-25.

[23] Clemence Humbert, Jonathan Joseph, "Introduction: The Politics of Resilience: Problematising Current Approaches," *Resilience* 7, no 3 (May 2019): 215-23, https://doi.org/10.1080/21693293.2019.1613738.

[24] Juha Vuori, "Politics of Resilience," Oxford Bibliographies, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199743292-0297.

[25] Vuori, "Politics of Resilience."

[26] Philippe Bourbeau, "A Genealogy of Resilience," *International Political Sociology* 12, no. 1 (March 2018): 19–35, https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olx026.

Commission Ursula von der Leyen during her announcement of the Recovery Plan and the implicit Recovery and Resilience Facility,[27] one can argue that resilience is understood not only as recovery after an unforeseen event, or as a return to the previous normal state, but rather as an opportunity to advance and tackle vulnerabilities showcased by an external shock.

This interpretation is based on a neoliberal notion of the concept of resilience developed by Bouchard, who characterizes the term in three ways:

- successful resistance to external shocks and return to original shape;
- successful adaptation to a new situation that requires adjustment, negotiation and compromise;
- the opportunity to respond creatively and innovatively to new challenges.[28]

This flexible interpretation of the notion of resilience and its combination with the notion of progress has been constantly endorsed by the European Union, but the way in which this feature can be strengthened has differed over time.

The first mention of the term resilience in a European Union strategic document is quite recent, in 2012, in a Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the EU Council entitled "The EU approach to resilience: learning from food security crises."[29] The European Union regarded resilience at that time to be part of its development and cooperation policy, in particular part of the sustainable development policy. In essence, the development of resilience was the main part of humanitarian aid policies, and the EU was the actor that could provide expertise and guide vulnerable countries in their consolidation, the

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[27] European Commission, "Speech by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary on the EU Recovery Package," May 25, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_ 20_941.

[28] Gerard Bouchard, "Neoliberalism in Québec: The Response of a Small Nation under Pressure," in *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era*, eds. Peter A. Hall, Lamont Michele (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 267-92.

[29] European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. The EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises. COM (2012) 586 final," October 3, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/com_2012__resilience_en.pdf.

ultimate European goal being to fight poverty: "Resilience is the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks."[30]

The definition offers a broad perspective on the actors that can increase their resilience, approaching this concept from a micro (individual) to a macro (regional) level, being aligned with the first two characteristics of resilience defined by Bouchard, those of resistance to shock and return to the original form, as well as adaptation to a new situation. It is worth noting that, from the European perspective described in 2012, resilience also meant a **rapid** recovery.

The term was then taken over in 2016, as part of the "Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union." This time, resilience applies to states and societies both outside and inside the EU. The EU maintains the principle of supporting and helping other countries and societies to become more resilient, explaining that it will be a partner in tackling governmental, economic, climate and energy crises. Nevertheless, the concept also becomes a way to consolidate democracy and European values, resilience being also a way to promote human rights, rule of law and fundamental freedoms: "Resilience is the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises."[31]

One can notice that the perspective remains at the macro level, on actors meant to foster resilience, resilience being a feature of states and societies. Nevertheless, one more principle is being introduced, the one that resilience and recovery after crises is achieved through reforms. Resilience thus becomes intrinsically linked to reforms, thus meaning that the main action needed after facing a shock, both internal and external, is that of **reform**. This perspective is close to the third feature of resilience explained by Bouchard, that resilience is an opportunity to respond creatively and innovatively to new challenges. However, the definition leaves room for interpretation on the characteristics and type of reforms that could really lead to resilience.

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[30] European Commission, "The EU Approach to Resilience," 5.

[31] European External Action Service, "Shared Vision, Common Action," 26.

The year 2020 was the time when the concept of resilience offered a forward-looking perspective and clear ways to achieve it. The European Commission launched a strategic foresight report in September 2020 charting "the course towards a more resilient Europe".[32] The pandemic forced the European Union to shift its priority from external towards internal resilience and to focus all efforts on strengthening the economy and society of the Member States and the Union as a whole: "Resilience refers to the ability not only to withstand and cope with challenges but also to transform in a sustainable, fair, and democratic manner."[33]

If in the past resilience was associated more with the recovery, rebound, with a kind of return to the original form, the current definition is oriented exclusively towards the future, being closely linked to **evolution**, development. Thus, a more resilient Europe is one that achieves sustainable and democratic reforms that leave no one behind, qualities that come from the four major dimensions of resilience identified in the report: green, digital, social and economic, geopolitical.

Geopolitical resilience and the Transatlantic partnership

Among the four dimensions of resilience identified, the one that mostly addresses the transatlantic relationship is by all means the geopolitical one. In the strategic foresight report, the geopolitical resilience is seen as "Europe bolstering its open strategic autonomy and global leadership role".[34] Whereas this narrative is more self-centered than what has usually been the EU foreign affairs and security policy position, it can be explained by the context in which the report was drafted, during the Trump era, characterized by a protectionist agenda. Consequently, the EU aimed to

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[32] European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, 2020 Strategic Foresight – Charting the Course towards a More Resilient Europe," COM/2020/493 final, September 9, 2020, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX: 52020DC0493, 6-7.

[33] Anna Rita Manca, Peter Benczur, Enrico Giovannini, "Building a Scientific Narrative towards a More Resilient EU Society. Part 1: A Conceptual Framework," Publications Office of the European Union, 2017, https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC 106265.

[34] European Commission, "Charting the Course towards a more Resilient Europe," 15.

look at its own need for strategic autonomy from a trade perspective, while promoting multilateralism.[35] Following President's Biden election, the EU proposed on December 2, 2020 a new EU-US agenda for global change,[36] based on the grounding principles of multilateralism, cooperation and common values.

With this in mind, a comeback to the three main axes relevant for the transatlantic relationship presented at the beginning of the research is needed, in order to define future perspectives on the EU-US relations and their contribution towards the geopolitical resilience of the European Union.

Prospects for security cooperation

The past decade has shaped the interpretation of security threats for both the European Union and the United States, expanding the exposure of the physical environment with the digital environment as well. There is a constant increase of hybrid threats, in particular related to cybersecurity and disinformation. These threats have been augmented during the pandemic, as illiberal non-state actors became more vocal in the context of containment measures, restriction of movement and sanitary measures in public spaces. Furthermore, the pandemic also highlighted the fragility of key infrastructure, both the digital one needed to provide accurate information in a critical situation, and the physical one, extensively tested for providing supplies, medical equipment and critical products.

Nevertheless, the complexity of security threats does not mean at all that the classical/physical security dimension must be ignored. On the contrary, at the moment of writing, we witness vulnerabilities and inequalities in conflict-affected and fragile countries. One of them is Afghanistan, a country that is currently again under the control of the fundamentalist Taliban group. This group ruled the nation before the US army entered Afghanistan in 2001. After 20 years on the ground, the US announced under the Trump administration the withdrawal of US troops,

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[35] European Commission, "Speech by President von der Leyen."

[36] European Commission, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council: A New EU-US Agenda for Global Change," Brussels, December 2, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/ info/sites/default/files/joint-communication-eu-us-agenda_en.pdf.

following a peace agreement signed in Doha in February 2020 with the Taliban, in which, in principle, both parts agreed that terrorist groups such as the Islamic State and al-Qaeda would not regain power and that Afghanistan would be ruled by an authority agreed among the Taliban and the government. Nevertheless, the ultraconservative group took control of most of the country and inflicted terror on thousands of Afghans who fled towards the Kabul airport in a desperate attempt to leave the country. These events raise at least two major concerns for the two great powers.

First of all, the Taliban regime will not receive international recognition due to its ongoing practices and violation of human rights, especially from great powers well-known for their normative global influence such as the EU and the US. This will create a constant instability in the region and will incur criticism for the incapacity of the West to bring peace in a region that has known conflict for several decades already.

Second, the Afghanistan conflict will generate a massive migration flux towards the European Union, which already raises concerns among several Member States reluctant to welcome refugees. The overall European Union policy will recommend the help and assistance of Afghanistan refugees, but will also proceed to a review of the migration policy, most probably preparing to welcome a significant wave of migrants. The population fleeing Afghanistan will also be subject to worries about illegal immigration and terrorist attacks, which will not only concern the EU but especially the United States, as they represent, in the eyes of the Afghan people, the actor that abandoned them when in need.[37]

But Afghanistan is not the only territory that requires international attention, and where transatlantic cooperation did not reach a positive outcome in terms of providing a peaceful solution after the withdrawal of troops. Stability is needed in Iraq and the conflicts in Syria and Yemen need to find a peaceful end. Furthermore, tackling the disruptive behavior of external actors in Libya, a priority of the European Union, could represent a cooperation field among the two actors. Last but not least, the EU

[37] Amie Ferris-Rotman, "What about My Dreams? How the U.S. Abandoned Women in Afghanistan," *Vanity Fair*, August 17, 2021, https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2021/08/how-the-us-abandoned-women-in-afghanistan.1

neighborhood is the main focus for the Union's foreign and security policy, especially considering enlargement prospects after Brexit. Therefore, a solid transatlantic partnership, through NATO, to preserve security in Ukraine would prove essential for the country's transition towards democracy, as well as dialogue in the Western Balkans in order to prepare the countries there to join NATO and the European Union.

In this context, the strategic document on the EU-US agenda for global change comes with a proposal for the United States: the establishment of a structured EU-US Security and Defense Dialogue[38] which should include exchanges of information on security and defense initiatives, crisis management, military operations and bilateral security matters.

Prospects for promoting multilateralism and democratic principles

The election of president Biden represented a return to the multilateralism commitments before the Trump era. Given the absence of the United States from the multilateral scene for the past years and the stagnation of the safeguarding democracy agenda, the European Union aims to take the lead as a normative power. In this sense, it launched the European Democracy Action Plan[39] at the end of 2020, which presents three priorities that could also constitute areas of transatlantic cooperation.

First of all, the promotion of free and fair elections. Africa and also Latin America can both be areas in which the EU and the US take supplementary measures to establish democratic practices, for instance, the increase of election observation missions, the launch of an operational mechanism that will support the cybersecurity of elections, guidance on rules for the financing of political parties.

Second, the strengthening of media freedom and pluralism has become a priority for the European Union, following the treatment received by journalists from Russia, Belarus or Ukraine and even Turkey or China. Therefore, the EU and the US could focus on creating a safe space for

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[38] European Commission, "A New EU-US Agenda for Global Change."

[39] European Commission, "European Democracy Action Plan," https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/european-democracy-action-plan_en.

journalists, in particular to address the threats against women journalists, provide funding for legal and practical assistance to journalists and also create a Media Ownership Monitor that will increase transparency and state advertising.

Last but not least, perhaps the most prominent threat is represented by disinformation and fake news, and in this sense, the EU proposes the creation of new instruments that counter foreign interference and that also allow imposing costs and sanctions on perpetrators. Moreover, given the digital revolution, the relationship with online platforms should also be further regulated. The two great powers might have different approaches in this sense, but the European Union is already taking steps in defining a Digital Services Act and a Digital Markets Act.

Recovery after the pandemic is key for a prosperous economy, and the competition with other great powers has taken a faster pace since the development process of a vaccine. China for instance represents both a rival, a competitor but also a commercial partner for the EU and the US. The two actors have different views on how to approach China's growing global role, nevertheless the EU-US Dialogue on China should set up ways to advance common interests.

Finally, the most pressing matter on the multilateral stage is the WTO reform, in which the two actors can have a joint leadership in finalizing the appointment of a new Director-General and exploring how to restore the essential dispute settlement function by reforming the Appellate Body.

Prospects for fruitful economic and trade relations

According to the latest numbers,[40] Europe and the United States account for 40% of the world's trade. Consequently, the two powers have a long history of commercial partnerships. The standard trade exchanges have nevertheless expanded following the pandemic, as health, medicine, research and also key supply chains all represent further cooperation areas with mutual economic benefits. In this sense, an immediate area of

40 European Commission, "Trade Policy, Countries and Regions," https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/united-states/, accessed June 20, 2021.

cooperation can be ensured through the COVAX Facility, a worldwide initiative aimed at equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines in which the EU has already been involved financially and took a leadership in the distribution of vaccines towards third countries. Furthermore, the WTO created a Trade and Health Initiative that aims to facilitate trade in essential medical goods and healthcare products to which the EU already adhered.

Additional green and digital transitions open new fields of trade relations. In terms of digital agenda, a possible proposal coming from the European Commission would be to create a transatlantic technology space,[41] based on secure 5G infrastructure, cooperation on digital supply chains, cybersecurity and information sharing. A second proposal would be the creation of a Transatlantic AI Agreement, showing leadership, vision but also respect for human rights.

With regard to the climate change, the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement definitely left room for leadership, a role occupied by the European Union, currently the most advanced organization fighting climate change. With ambitious legislative proposals such as the *European Green Deal* or *Fit for 55 Package*, the EU is paving the way to become the world's first climate neutral continent by 2050. President Biden's commitment to re-join the Paris Agreement opened the market for a green transatlantic trade agenda and, in the upcoming future, markets on clean and circular technologies, such as renewables, grid-scale energy storage, batteries, clean hydrogen, and carbon capture, storage and utilization will certainly represent a commercial interest on the both sides of the Atlantic.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic represented a symmetric shock for countries worldwide, with asymmetrical economic and social consequences according to the level of response and preparedness for this unprecedented crisis. The pandemic determined a certain reset of the international order and consequently great powers focused on a fast recovery after the pandemic,

[41] European Commission, "A New EU-US Agenda for Global Change."

understanding that the timing will prove essential in the competition for leadership on the international stage.

After a shift towards protectionism in foreign affairs policies promoted by former President Donald Trump, the United States confronted the pandemic with a series of uncoordinated measures. It was only after current President Joe Biden took office that the US administration presented a concrete plan for recovery, focused on the economic recovery of the United States through investments, job creation, outlining the long-term goals of combating the climate crisis and tackling racial inequality and, last but not least, "building back better than before."

The European Union, on the other hand, mobilized resources to support the Member States economically and promoted the concept of solidarity through the discourse of the EU leaders. Due to the complexity and magnitude of the pandemic impact, the EU proposed the "Next Generation EU", a major 750 billion euros recovery plan based entirely on the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the largest financial instrument in the history of the European Union.

The concept of resilience has become the main goal of European policies and the main solution to the consequences of the crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and, while not explicitly mentioned by the US administration, its meaning has also been integrated in the American Rescue Plan. The research conducted on the history and understanding of this concept in the European Union points out towards the idea that the geopolitical dimension of the EU resilience is intrinsically linked to the evolution of the transatlantic relation with the United States. Consequently, the paper analyzed prospects on three main axes: security cooperation, multilateralism and democratic values, economic and trade relations.

The correlation with current challenges in each of the axis indicated that the there are several areas of cooperation between the two great powers that could lead to positive long-term outcomes which will consequently improve the geopolitical resilience of the European Union.

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The Coordination between the European External Action Service and National Ministries of Foreign Affairs

DIANA-CRISTINA MOIȘ

Introduction

As a newly placed diplomatic actor within the institutional landscape of the European Union, the European External Action Service has become a truly captivating topic in European Foreign Affairs, its operating mechanism generating interest among both researchers and policy makers. The debates organized around the potential reform of the European External Action Service in current European diplomacy have given rise to unique contributions within the literature that converge, in particular, towards its quasi-institutional nature, the role assumed in the field of European foreign policy and the relations it establishes with the EU institutions, with a lesser emphasis on its articulation with the diplomatic services of the Member States. Such a detail is essential in strengthening the role of the European External Action Service, especially if we look at its operational dimension, as it operates in collaboration with the diplomatic services of the Member States, under an intergovernmental cooperation mechanism.

In light of the above, this present contribution brings to the fore a subject less addressed in the literature, in an attempt to outline the effectiveness of the mechanism for coordinating European affairs at the national level, such a mechanism being a crucial issue when it comes to assembling a brand new diplomacy, with a particular emphasis on how the European External Action Service, as an unprecedented diplomatic entity, manages to interact with national foreign affairs ministries.

The research project is built on three research questions, in an attempt to provide a better understanding of the real nature of European foreign policy. The research questions I propose seek to clarify how the interaction

between the European External Action Service and the national ministries of foreign affairs is performed, then to what extent the objectives of the Common Foreign and Security Policy are identified and supported by the actions of the Member States in the field of foreign policy, so that we have the opportunity to assess the effort of the Member States in the implementation of the European Foreign Policy Strategy at the national level. The results of the first two research questions will complement the third, so that we can determine the what extent the European External Action Service could pave the way towards a brand new diplomacy at the European level.

In order to answer the questions stated above, the research methodology to be applied will involve the successive combination of three research techniques, namely, a document analysis that will complement a case study, which in turn will include in its composition a comparative analysis. The whole rhetoric is to be framed by an institutional approach. Therefore, on the one hand, official documents will be subjected to analysis, such as the reports set affiliated to the EU Global Strategy or the press releases issued at the ministries of foreign affairs level, on the other hand, unofficial documents will be subjected to analysis, materialized through studies, reports or articles from specialized volumes. The case study I propose aims to fill a gap encountered within the literature, by examining the adaptation of the diplomatic apparatus of some states in Eastern Europe and Western Europe to CFSP standards, while analyzing the cleavage lines settled since the early periods of integration between the Eastern and Western European states when it comes to the calibration of national foreign policy. By default, the case study I propose will lead to the outline of a comparative analysis.

The present contribution will be split into three sections, the first being dealing with the history of the European foreign policy integration and the setting-up process of the European External Action Service, the second will analyze the particularities of the interaction mechanism established between the European External Action Service and the national ministries of foreign affairs. The third section will be organized as a case study applied to the particular situations of Romania and France, this part being designed to host a framework that allows us to identify a concrete answer in relation to

the central research question of this project, namely, to what extent the objectives of the Common Foreign and Security Policy are met and supported by the Member States' foreign policy action program.

A new era for the European foreign policy

The European Union's foreign policy is often referred to as a puzzle based on how it was assembled, as its complexity poses many challenges to its institutional architects. The rise of a European Union foreign policy was not a smooth process of continuous integration as, from the 1970s until the emergence of the Maastricht Treaty, the CFSP faced many challenges[1] that set barriers to its calibration. During the 1970s, the establishment of European Political Cooperation determined the current outline of the European Union's foreign policy. Initially, it had been given a relatively pragmatic form, as the national foreign policy interests of the states participating in the European integration process were the only elements[2] that would become part of it. The rise of the European integration process, however, put the European Union's foreign policy on a new path, as the set of reforms stipulated in the treaties led to its recurrent reshaping.

The concept of European Political Cooperation has attracted the attention of the political decision-makers since the 1960s, but the divergent views of General de Gaulle and his partners led to the postponement of its implementation.[3] With the withdrawal of General de Gaulle from the political scene, the Member States agreed to align their interests of national foreign policy. European Political Cooperation initially played the role of coordinating the foreign policy of the Member States,[4] its leadership being placed under the responsibility of national capitals. We may notice,

1 Joachim Koops and Gjovalin Macaj, *The European Union as a Diplomatic Actor* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 18.

2 Ramses Wessel, "Common Foreign, Security, and Defense Policy," in *A Companion to European Union Law and International Law*, eds. Dennis Patterson, Anna Sodersten (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 411.

3 CVCE, "European Political Cooperation," 2016, https://www.cvce.eu/en/collections/unit-content/-/unit/02bb76df-d066-4c08-a58a-d4686a3e68ff/fed975ca-665b-4c89-ac04-0ac7e8919c51/Resources#23 ec8fd2-1ae6-4133-91a5-4788e2e184bf, accessed May 3, 2021.

4 CVCE, "European Political Cooperation."

therefore, the early intergovernmental nature of the European foreign policy. The Member States developed a genuine system of foreign policy cooperation through the European Political Cooperation, so it was classified as a precursor to the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The reforms introduced by the Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s played a key role in shaping the European Union's political apparatus. The principles established at that time by the Treaty remain fundamentally valid today, and the essential legacy of the Maastricht Treaty is found in the field of the European Union's foreign affairs. Its emergence, according to the introductory provisions, marked a new stage in the process of integrating European foreign policy,[5] with the CFSP being officially established in 1993. The innovations established by the Maastricht Treaty led to the introduction of specific provisions in European foreign policy,[6] as it was to be guided by a set of principles organized around the ideal of peacekeeping and strengthening international cooperation. Multilevel foreign policy development has been institutionalized in the EU, while national sovereignty over foreign policy has been firmly maintained by Member States.[7] The reforms introduced under the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty have mediated an operation of coordinating the foreign policy of the Member States. Thus, the Treaty assisted the concerted initiative of the Member States in establishing an action plan to contribute to the pursuit of their common interests in the field of foreign policy,[8] through which meetings were to be held with the participation of leading representatives of national ministries of foreign affairs.

After about a decade of debates over the institutional reform of the European Union, the emergence of the Lisbon Treaty has given rise to new expectations for improving the coherence of the Common Foreign and

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5 Eur-lex, "Common Foreign and Security Policy," https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/foreign_ security_policy.html, accessed May 5, 2021.

6 Federal Foreign Office, "The Development of the CFSP," 2018, https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/europa/aussenpolitik/gasp/-/22830.

7 Mark Furness, "The European External Action Service: a New Institutional Framework for EU Development Cooperation," Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik Working Paper No. 15, 2010, 4, https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/199350.

8 Furness, "The European External Action Service," 3.

Security Policy. In the context of the multiple structural discrepancies between the foreign policy agreed at European level and the one agreed at national level, the Lisbon Treaty generated the unilateralism of the structure of the European Union by introducing far-reaching changes that directly influenced the CFSP sector. Significant changes in European external relations have been designed to make a significant contribution to strengthening the European Union's profile on the international stage. In fact, the changes focused on reviewing the position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, introducing the position of President of the European Council, and establishing the European External Action Service[9] within the institutional landscape of the European Union.

The High Representative has been given new responsibilities, being assisted in his work by staff from the specialized departments of the Commission and the General Secretariat of the Council. The novelty that the Lisbon Treaty added to the position of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was materialized in the fact that its role was to be complemented by a hybrid body of European foreign policy, composed of diplomats from Member States. The relationship established between the extended responsibilities of the High Representative and the integration of the European External Action Service into the classic institutional formula of the European Union has been an innovative element in the organizational logic of European foreign policy, considering the main aspiration a body of transnational diplomacy. Vanhoonacker and Pomorska, in a study expressing their perspective on the European Union's foreign affairs agenda,[10] tried to highlight that the placement of the European External Action Service under the authority of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy did not represent anything other than an

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[9] Katerina Koehler, "European Foreign Policy after Lisbon: Strengthening the EU as an International Actor," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 4, No. 1 (2010): 58-59.

[10] Sophie Vanhoonacker and Karolina Pomorska, "The European External Action Service and Agenda-Setting in European Foreign Policy," *Journal of European Public Policy* 20, No. 9 (2013): 1321-324.

initiative designed to stimulate greater coherence in the European foreign policy line.

The impact of the European External Action Service upon national diplomacies

The Common Foreign and Security Policy, as we noted in the analysis in the previous chapter, has been governed by an intergovernmental logic of cooperation since the early periods of integration. Although there have been EU initiatives throughout the integration process to give supranational accents to this area, the CFSP has continued to evolve into a strong intergovernmental form. As a result, the EU's potential to initiate and manage diplomatic relations has regularly experienced difficulties. [11]

Modern diplomacy is facing major changes evolving at an unprecedented pace, altering its operational character. Based on the premise that diplomacy operates within a community of sovereign states, the European Union provides a pragmatic example, as it is guided in the sphere of diplomatic activity by intergovernmental working institutions. The European External Action Service operates in collaboration with the national ministries of foreign affairs,[12] the CFSP being another area in which the European Union has shared competences. The establishment of the European External Action Service has led to changes in the conventional structure of national ministries of foreign affairs,[13] which has sparked a massive wave of controversy among the Member States, as states do not remain passive when the elements of their sovereignty are at stake. At the same time, the establishment of the European External Action Service met

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[11] Jan Wouters and Sanderijn Duquet, "The EU, EEAS and Union Delegations and International Diplomatic Law: New Horizons," Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies Working Paper No. 62, 2011, 4, https://ghum.kuleuven.be/ggs/publications/working_papers/2011/62WoutersDuquet.

[12] Stanzer Volker, "New Realities in Foreign Affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st Century," Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Research Paper No. 11, 2018, 10, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2018RP11_sze.pdf.

[13] EU Council, "Explanatory Memorandum and Proposal for the Establishment of the Organisation and Functioning of the European External Action (EEAS) Service," 2010, http://register.consilium.europa.eu/ doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%208029%202010%20INIT.

the aspiration of the elites of the European decision-making process, that of avoiding a "communitization"[14] of European foreign policy.

The first years in the activity of the European External Action Service have seen real changes in blurring the boundaries between Member States and EU institutions. However, these have proven insufficient to undermine intergovernmental logic[15] in the areas of CFSP cooperation. The European External Action Service has created a new relationship between Brussels and national capitals, by recruiting professional diplomats from national ministries of foreign affairs,[16] their work moving to a higher level. The selection of diplomats is made on the basis of vaguely defined criteria, mainly, based on expertise. In essence, the secondment process is heavily promoted by the Member States as the European External Action Service provides them various opportunities. The developed states perceive the EEAS as an extension of national diplomacy, while the emerging states perceive it as a shaping factor in national foreign policy. The national ministries of foreign affairs are reshaped by the practices of the European External Action Service. We note, therefore, a strong interference between the EU and states in an area which, although initially intergovernmental in nature, has continued to evolve in this form. The main area with which the national ministries of foreign affairs had to comply concerns the way in which human resources are managed. In order to promote the candidates eligible for secondment to the EEAS, the Member States have adopted heterogeneous approaches.[17] The relationship between the European External Action Service and the national ministries of foreign affairs is a key factor in increasing the coherence of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy. For instance, the diplomats from small Member States, such as Ireland or Sweden, appreciated the potential of the European

[14] Ana Juncos and Karolina Pomorska, "The European External Action Service (EEAS)," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics, January 30, 2020, 7, https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1081.

[15] Rosa Balfour, Caterina Carta and Kristi Raik, *The European External Service and National Foreign Ministries, Convergence or Divergence?* (London: Ashgate, 2015), 63.

[16] Balfour, Carta, Raik, "The European External Service," 22-23.

[17] Rosa Balfour and Kristi Raik, "Introduction," in *The European External Action Service and National Diplomacies*, ed. Rosa Balfour and Kristi Raik, European Policy Centre EPC Issue Paper No. 73, March 2013, 7.

External Action Service to provide the necessary resources for national diplomacy, while on the other hand, influential states such as Germany or France appreciated the opportunity to project the objective of their national foreign policy on a European scale.[18]

Diplomats' access into the European External Action Service is influenced by the existence of a training course conducted at the national ministries of foreign affairs level, where the European diplomats assimilate "EU procedures and regulations."[19] For instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy or Spain[20] involve their diplomats in a rigorous training process before seconding to the European External Action Service. Once transferred to the EEAS, diplomats undergo a new training process, focused on three axes: "training for headquarters and delegations, training for policies offered by DG Human Resources and training for a partnership with Member States and other international organizations (for example, the United Nations)."[21] European diplomats appreciate the exchange between the national Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the European External Action Service as a welcome practice in stimulating the interaction between the elites of European diplomacy.

The European Union's global strategy

Despite its economic performance, the European Union, until 2016, had failed to develop a strategy setting out priority areas for CFSP action. The European Security Strategy of 2003 failed to contribute to an increasing the role of the European Union as a global player, while the EU Global Strategy, in stark contrast to 2016, added new valences to the CFSP sector, by framing European foreign policy around specific priorities. In times marked by a galloping evolution of populism, SGUE gave life to the

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[18] Christian Lequesne, "EU Foreign Policy Through the Lens of Practice Theory: A Different Approach to the European External Action Service," *Cooperation and Conflict* 50, No. 3 (2015): 6.

[19] Simon Duke, "Diplomatic Training and the Challenges Facing the EEAS," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 7, No. 15 (2011): 96.

[20] Duke, "Diplomatic Training," 96.

[21] Juncos and Pomorska, "The European External Action Service," 314-15.

transformative potential of the European Union, bringing European values[22] and the interests of the citizens to the forefront. The European Union's Global Strategy emerged at a crucial time, in response both to the increasingly complex and conflict-prone external environment and to the internal divisions[23] that threatened the coherence of the European Union's external action. The CFSP has remained the only area isolated from the broad trends of European politicization. Prior to the development of the EUGS, the politicization process did not affect the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The views of the EUGS and the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon are complementary, as they provide guidance by complementing the role of the European External Action Service.[24] The strategy provides a preview of the impact of the European External Action Service on the Member States' diplomacy. In essence, the EU Global Strategy is an action plan designed to bring together the intergovernmental features of European foreign policy with its supranational dimension, which has been placed under the coordination of the European External Action Service. Overall, the central objective of the Strategy is to avoid the application of traditional principles for shaping European external relations.[25] Unlike the set of strategies developed at European level in a general context, the EUGS was born in an atypical context, as it was meant to address an increasingly dangerous environment that damaged the imperatives of European peace and security, undermining the liberal values upon which the EU is based. Thus, the European Union's Global Strategy has desirably organized European foreign policy objectives around five general priorities focused

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22 Quentin Weiler, "La Stratégie Globale de l'UE: de quoi s'agit-il?" [The EU's Global Strategy: What Is It about?], *La revue geopolitique*, January 3, 2017, https://www.diploweb.com/La-Strategie-Globale-de-l-UE-de.html, accessed June 23, 2021.

23 European External Action Service, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe: A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy," 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/ files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf, accessed June 23, 2021.

24 Esther Barbe and Pol Morillas, "The EU Global Strategy: The Dynamics of a More Politicized and Politically Integrated Foreign Policy," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32, No. 6 (2019): 758.

25 Barbe and Morillas, "The EU Global Strategy," 758.

on EU security, resilience of states and emerging societies, integrated conflict management, regional order based on cooperation and governance in the 21st century.[26]

Relationship between the European External Action Service and National Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Case study: Romania / France

As the exploration of the subsequent effects of the European integration process on the new members in the Eastern Europe has generated a massive wave of curiosity among researchers, prompting the emergence of genuine contributions within the literature, the case study I propose in this chapter is designed to serve as a contribution to the diversification of existing contributions in the research area, through a comparative analysis aimed at highlighting the effects of the Europeanization process on the internal mechanisms of national foreign policy of the Member States. Therefore, we will turn our attention to the outlined coordination between the European External Action Service and national ministries of foreign affairs. As such, I will use as a reference point an Eastern European state (Romania), in contrast to the central pillar in terms of European foreign policy (France). Going through the literature, we will note that there have been studies conducted on the relationship between the European External Action Service and national Ministries of Foreign Affairs, but Romania has never been the subject of this type of analysis, due to the marginal position assumed at European level. We will also find studies on the relationship between the EEAS and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs carried out until 2012, and not later, although France assumes the highest position in European foreign policy. Therefore, I intend to synchronize this project with a broader research on the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, in the attempt to fill an existing gap in the literature.

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[26] European External Action Service, "From Shared Vision to Common Action: Implementing the EU Global Strategy Year-1," 2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eugs-report-full_brochure_year_1.pdf.

The Romanian case

Compared to the foreign policy of other European states (such as France, which we are going to explore), Romania's foreign policy has encountered major deficiencies in terms of calibration once our country has chosen to follow the Western path. The emergence of the European External Action Service gave it new values, opening a new stage in Romanian diplomacy. The European External Action Service, in the case of Romania, acts as a shaping factor of the national foreign policy, providing to it the possibility to promote the national interests at European level. In order to provide a better understanding of the EEAS's contribution to shaping Romanian foreign policy, we will investigate the mechanism of interaction between the Service and the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

With the collapse of the communist regime, the tendency of reorientation towards the West outlined the new directions of Romanian foreign policy, Romania's main aspiration coagulating around the goal of Euro-Atlantic integration. The alignment of Romanian foreign policy norms with the European foreign policy standards was part of a rigid, complex and long process, as Romania was to implement major changes in the national diplomatic infrastructure.[27] Romanian diplomats have supported the strengthening of the role of the European External Action Service since its first years of activity,[28] taking into account the institution's potential to provide new resources to the national diplomacy. Based on a project led by the Elcano Institute within the European Political Network of Institutes in 2011-2012, a questionnaire was conducted on the impact of the EEAS on national diplomacies, then disseminated in nine countries (including Romania). The results of this study certified the fact that, in the first two years of operation of the Service, "Romania manifested itself as an active

[27] Clara Volintiru and Maria-Floriana Popescu, "Romanian Priorities and the Presidency of the Council of the EU," Aspen Institute Romania, December 2018, 55-56, DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.21814.96320.

[28] Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Reprezentanța Permanentă a României la UE" [Romania's Permanent Representative at the EU], 2020, https://ue.mae.ro/node/148, accessed June 28, 2021.

supporter of the EEAS and the role of the High Representative. Romania has considered the EEAS as an opportunity both for the EU as a whole and for itself, as it offers the opportunity to multiply its interests and priorities of the national foreign policy, while also representing a good training ground for its diplomats.[29] The reverberations of the late accession in the community bloc, however, generated a relatively moderate presence of Romanian diplomats in the main staff compartments of the European External Action Service.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs advocated for an adequate geographic balance within the European External Action Service, requesting the provision of a fair representation of Romanian diplomats at the level of the European External Action Service, including in the management forums.[30] Initially, the staff of the EEAS was composed of officials from the administrative apparatus of the European Commission and the EU Council. At the time of the establishment of the European External Action Service, Romania did not have a significant number of representatives within these institutions, therefore, it could not aspire to many places in the EEAS apparatus or in the management compartments. Under these circumstances, the request submitted by the Romanian diplomatic service regarding the equitable representation of Romanian diplomats at EEAS level did not meet the national expectations. Furthermore, the appointment of candidates to the leading positions did not target any Romanian diplomat, and this determined the then foreign minister to express in plenary his dissatisfaction with the nomination process.[31]

However, Romanian diplomats continued to show their support for strengthening the role of the European External Action Service. The possibility of capitalizing on the expertise at European level, as well as the

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[29] Ignacio Molina and Alicia Sorroza, "Strengthening the EU As a Global Actor: The EEAS and the Europeanisation of National Diplomacies," Real Instituto Elcano Working Paper No. 6, 2013, 6, http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/a102b9004fc8d75280efcaccba746acc/EGS-Molina-Sorroza-EU-global-actor-EEAS-europeanisation-national-diplomacies.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=a102b9004fc8d75280efcaccba746acc&fbclid=IwAR3IG-iZUeqRTSR6J4lRr6QpVVSpwvXbcZpIrt5as BZy5BpO08c_Rt0q2gY.

[30] Molina and Sorroza, "Strengthening the EU," 49-50.

[31] Molina and Sorroza, "Strengthening the EU," 50.

possibility of assimilating new practices are auxiliary arguments to justify the motivation of Romanian diplomats to promote, as much as allowed, the increase of the functions of the European External Action Service. Along the way, Romania's representation in the European External Action Service has changed, given the fact that the number of national representatives in the EU institutions has increased. At the same time, the process of seconding diplomats contributed to increasing Romania's representation in the EEAS. However, compared to other European countries, our country does not currently enjoy a very consistent representation at the EEAS level. The support of Romanian diplomats for strengthening the role of the European External Action Service is also shown through the effort to implement at national level the Global Strategy of the European Union on the priority areas, according to national resources.

During the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council, Romania set as its main objective the promotion of a pragmatic vision based on the imperative of cohesion.[32] This goal has not been set by chance, as cohesion is the driving force behind the European Union's Global Strategy, which has been repeatedly confirmed in the particular areas on which the EUGS focuses. The Romanian Presidency of the EU Council pursued specific objectives, grouped on the dimension of strengthening the defense and security capacity of the European Union. In the content of a press release issued at the Romanian MFA level, we discover that our country has paid distinct attention to strengthening the EU-NATO strategic partnership, respectively to promoting coordinated and coherent actions in the neighborhood of the European Union.[33] For Romania, strengthening the EU-NATO partnership is a major priority of national foreign policy. It is no coincidence that this objective occupies the first position on the agenda of priorities, being strongly related to Romania's aspiration to consolidate its

[32] Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Începând cu 1 ianuarie 2019, România preia Președinția rotativă a Consiliului Uniunii Europene" [Starting with January 1, 2019, Romania Will Assume the Rotating Presidency of the EU], 2018, https://www.mae.ro/node/47744.

[33] România2019, "Priorități" [Priorities], 2019, https://www.romania2019.eu/prioritati/?fbclid=IwAR07kH-7y7j4CIR6UYL1GsbruLijY25VWrfmyE9Qr3atzq2gLyQlI-i9vds.

national profile within NATO and EU. Under the auspices of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with the European Union Institute for Security Studies organized a conference on February 28, 2019 whose theme focused on hybrid threats, resilience and strategic communication. The conference took place at the Palace of Parliament, bringing together experts and high-ranking officials in a debate on the nature of the evolution of hybrid threats. Expert groups from the European Commission, European External Action Service, European Center of Excellence for Combating Hybrid Threats and NATO discussed potential solutions for prevention, the EU's response to hybrid threats and improved strategic communication.[34]

I believe that, although there were various events during Romania's term in office, the specificity of this conference met the objective of strengthening the EU-NATO strategic partnership in a very coherent manner, discussing the hybrid threats facing the EU, which represented the starting point for the implementation of the EU Global Strategy.

The action directions of our country were correlated, at the same time, with the dimension of resilience and consolidation of strategic communication at national level. According to the MFA activity report for 2019, during its term in office, Romania initiated a series of steps aimed at strengthening societal resilience and raising awareness among young people about online misinformation and fake news. Thus, it gave rise to the elaboration of projects meant to promote media literacy. Their result was to ensure stronger cooperation "with civil society, the media and academia"[35] at national level. We note, therefore, that during its term in office, in an attempt to complement the vision of the EUGS, our country placed a distinct emphasis on the hybrid-resilience-strategic communication dimension in formulating objectives.

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[34] Security Studies Institute, "Facing Hybrid Threats Through Consolidated Resilience and Enhanced Strategic Communication," 2019, https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/facing-hybrid-threats-through-consolidated-resilience-and-enhanced-strategic-communication.

[35] Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Raport de activitate 2019" [Activity Report 2019], 2019, 82.

The French case

Various European actors have brought significant contributions to stimulating the integration process, but France, as a founding state of the European Union, is one of the main supporters of this process, being seen as the engine of European integration. In line with European foreign policy, France has taken on a leading role, leaving a strong mark on collective diplomacy. In fact, it is no coincidence that we find the first contemporary ministry of foreign affairs in Europe precisely on the territory of the French state. In the 21st century, Paris became the main architect of European foreign policy, and with the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, France continued to promote the importance of expanding the integration project, in the attempt to provide Europe with a privileged position in the new multipolar world order.

France's foreign policy is based on a long diplomatic tradition, which promotes a number of basic principles, such as the right of peoples to self-determination, respect for human rights and democratic values.[36] French foreign policy brings together both moments of triumph and moments in which France has had to adapt its classical principles to the new historical circumstances. Despite the new standards with which it was to align its principles, France made considerable efforts to protect its national independence. National independence is the main Gaullist legacy,[37] and based on the beliefs that Charles de Gaulle promoted, France has contributed to defining and consolidating the values on which the European construction is currently based.

Although the emergence of the European External Action Service in the institutional landscape of the European Union has given rise to colossal opportunities to complete and promote national foreign policy objectives for

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[36] Damaris Englert, "La politique étrangere de la France" [France's Foreign Policy], Grin Recherche et Publier, 2009, https://m.grin.com/document/152116?fbclid=IwAR1t4YSTMUQ n8r0pZmZGMt2a4O tUf UY8PhOzDBl0Mmf7jWmcFE7dVvEbNtg.

[37] Nargiz Hajiyeva, "Gaullism as a Legacy of Charles De Gaulle," *Modern Diplomacy*, July 6, 2017, https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2017/07/06/gaullism-as-a-legacy-of-charles-de-gaulle/?fbclid=IwAR1T7lFl_tPPyHMHFITUN2efWVAlFiVEegvdx9UeG62Ldj0m3uTCGOCAfMo.

certain European countries, as well as that of Romania, France's situation seems to contradict of this pattern. The European External Action Service, in the French case, did not make any exceptional changes either to the classical principles of defining national foreign policy objectives or to the structure or mechanism of operation of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. French diplomats do not qualify the European External Action Service as a reforming force capable of making substantial changes to the principles of setting French foreign policy objectives, but rather as an optional means of transposing national foreign policy ambitions into European diplomacy.[38] The French executive played a key role in setting up the EEAS, being pro-actively involved in designing a diplomatic service to orchestrate European external action. The aim of this approach was to try to avoid the possibility of the European External Action Service becoming fully autonomous vis-à-vis the Member States.[39]

The European External Action Service has failed to make major changes to France's diplomatic apparatus, but French diplomats show their support for strengthening its functions, as they perceive it as an extension of national diplomacy. According to the results of the same study on the impact of the EEAS on national diplomacies (which included Romania in 2011-2012), Molina and Sorroza concluded that "France has supported the role of the European External Action Service since it was first on the agenda, with the aim of using Europe as a force multiplier leading to a French Europeanisation"[40]. France certainly supports the growing role of the European Union as a global player, but excludes the loss of national sovereignty. An eloquent example offered in this regard can be found in the statements of a renowned diplomat with outstanding activity in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (who also served as Executive Secretary General of the European External Action Service until 2015), Pierre Vimont. According to him, the possibility of "making European foreign policy much more French and French foreign policy much more European"[41] is by no

[38] Balfour, Carta, Raik, "The European External Service," 95-96.

[39] Balfour and Raik, "The European External Action Service," 133.

[40] Molina and Sorroza, "Strengthening the EU," 6.

[41] Pavol Szalai, "There is No Real 'European Foreign Policy', says Former EU Diplomat," *Euractiv*, June 14, 2019, https://www.euractiv.com/section/european-external-action-service/

means ruled out by the French executive that said it would be a feasible prospect for strengthening the European Union's security architecture.

Despite Macron's lack of experience, once he took office as president in 2017, he has constantly worked to convince his electorate that he is capable of managing the national security situation. In order to strike a balance between national self-assertion and European integration, the French president, from the first months after taking office, has tried to outline a renewed vision of national foreign policy. As such, France has enjoyed an unexpected return to the forefront of international politics following the active presence of President Macron on the international stage. In a speech delivered in 2018, the President of the Republic stated that, according to the new French foreign policy agenda, France's objectives were oriented towards setting up a reform plan applicable to migration and asylum policy, combating terrorism, initiating new approaches to respond to the challenges of collective security, respectively the consolidation of peace.[42] In other words, Macron's plan was to create the necessary climate for France to act in such a way as to help strengthen the European Union's role on the international stage. Internal legitimacy gives Macron the foundation of France's external position, so that Paris can become a potential promoter of liberal democracy, campaigning for an united European Union.

France has been an active supporter in the process of developing and implementing the European Union's Global Strategy. For instance, in partnership with the European External Action Service and the European Commission, it organized a meeting entitled "France and the EU Global Strategy,"[43] at which Commissioner-General Michel Yahiel reiterated the fundamental contribution that France had made to completing European

interview/there-is-no-real-european-foreign-policy-says-former-eu-diplomat/?fbclid=IwAR3 xVKicSPWXzEibzhjsGhIlcepNvx4C xWSR_0GO4PC0jR4vfnolc8XMDis.

42 French Embassy in London, "President Sets Out Foreign Policy Goals for 2018," January 4, 2018 https://uk.ambafrance.org/President-sets-out-foreign-policy-goals-for-2018?fbclid=IwAR2Qca2ybzy1 inVZJMEQHoIgi8PPcmqkBLrAia9Yxf9JXzj54ycqBtVxiqs.

43 French Government, "La France et la stratégie globale de l'UE: Quelles approches en matière de prévention des conflits et diplomatie économique?" [France and the EU's Global Strategy: What Approaches Concerning Conflict Prevention and Economic Diplomacy?], March 13, 2017, https://www.strategie.gouv.fr/debats/france-strategie-globale-de-lue-approches-matiere-de-prevention-conflits-diplomatie.

Union with the launch of the reform plan supported by the EUGS.[44] The exchanges of views between diplomats allowed both the highlighting of the ambition reflected by the objectives of the Strategy, the relaunch of the European project in the context of hybrid threats that place the potential for reform of the European Union, and the establishment of main directions for France to act so as to contribute to the completion of the visions of the EUGS. For instance, the Syrian problem has been one of the main challenges facing both European and French foreign policy,[45] which has led to the adoption of a set of measures focused on conflict prevention, strengthening security and identifying mechanisms for cooperation with neighborhood actors. At the same time, resilience has been placed at the heart of the European Union's humanitarian and development goals 40, making it a key priority on the French executive's foreign policy agenda. We note, therefore, that the French President's efforts have led to establishing a point of equilibrium between international self-affirmation and European integration, which has contributed to the implementation of the EUGS at the national level in all its priority areas.

Conclusions

Diplomacy has been at stake since the early days of European integration, and as a result Member States have made considerable efforts to maintain their sovereign status. However, gradually, at European level, Member States have developed a genuine system of foreign policy cooperation by establishing formal institutional structures. The Lisbon Treaty has brought fundamental changes to the classic format of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty, as a result of the reforms it has introduced. Its innovations have previously targeted the European Union's external relations sector, taking a leading role in assembling a new type of diplomacy at the European level. The establishment of the European External Action Service can certainly be described as the most innovative institutional reform known to the Treaties, as it has been a significant step in the process of developing a

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[44] French Government, "La France et la stratégie globale."
[45] French Government, "La France et la stratégie globale."

common European foreign policy. Except for its potential to assemble a common diplomatic system of the European Union, following its emergence, the European External Action Service has highlighted an alarming problem that creates barriers to the process of integrating European foreign policy, that of the heterogeneity of Member States when it comes to the CFSP priorities. Through its assigned role, it managed to develop an avant-garde mechanism of interaction with the national capitals, by seconding diplomats from the national ministries of foreign affairs level. The diplomats are the driving force in the implementation of the EEAS-Member State interaction mechanism. The secondment of national diplomats within the European External Action Service is the direct way of coordination between the national ministries of foreign affairs and the EEAS.

Influential states have significant advantages, enjoying a consistent representation within the European External Action Service, while emerging states have a modest representation, due to geopolitical issues or even late accession to the European Union, as I noted in the particular situation of Romania. In light of my analysis performed in the context of the case study, we managed to identify how these disparities are manifested in the particular Romania-France models.

Although both countries have contributed to strengthening the role of the European External Action Service, within the limits of the resources available at national level, France enjoys a majority representation in the European External Action Service. Its consistent representation in the EEAS is justified by its stature at the European level, as France's outstanding diplomatic tradition has given it the status of a central pillar in the field of the CFSP. By contrast, Romania was deprived of a consistent representation within the European External Action Service, a first cause being that of late accession to the EU. Despite the involvement of the Romanian state in the process of developing the role of the European External Action Service, as an Eastern European state newly emancipated from the Soviet bloc, with a foreign policy revived by joining NATO and the EU, Romania's word in the CFSP does not carry the same weight as the word of France, and in general, that of developed countries in Western Europe with an early diplomatic culture and tradition in the process of integrating European foreign policy. Therefore, I could say that the national diplomatic tradition is a crucial

element that has stimulated the intensification of the convergence cleavage between Eastern and Western European states in participating in the process of integrating European foreign policy.

The establishment of the European External Action Service has paved the way towards a new era of European diplomacy, but its success in fulfilling its full role depends on the support that the Member States are willing to offer. The support of the Member States determines the success of the European External Action Service in helping to materialize a revolutionary European diplomatic system, which in turn would lead to the strengthening of the European Union's capacity to act on the international stage. Therefore, there is a need to encourage the Member States to show their support for the process of integrating the European foreign policy by delegating competences in the field of European foreign policy to the CFSP. In practice, a European foreign policy with little influence from the European Union, doubled by an intergovernmental cooperation mechanism, has proven very ineffective. I believe that, in order to harmonize the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy, a scenario would be feasible for a concerted initiative by developed countries to delegate certain foreign policy powers to the CFSP.

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The Challenges and Limitations of Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management Operations on the Ground: A Comparison of the EU's Civilian and Military Missions in Mali

IONELA RUȘTI

Civil-military coordination in EU's crisis management structures: CIMIC and CMCO

To better serve our purpose of understanding the doctrines that lie behind a civil-military operation, such as the ones conducted by the EU, we shall begin by providing some explanations related to two important concepts that are often mentioned in efforts to interconnect civil and military approaches to crisis management: Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Civil-Military Coordination (CMCO). These have been adopted by the EU in its development of a doctrine governing crisis management operations and they are intertwined with the same concepts that NATO and the United Nations (UN) share. However, given the specificities as well as limitations of EU external policies, CIMIC and CMCO have gained their very own understanding within the Union.

What is interesting about CIMIC is that the concept does not apply only to the EU context, but to all Member States. Each of them has its own CIMIC conception, although they do not differ much. In fact, it is more common or, better said, traditional, for a sovereign state to have such a doctrine, given that it also possesses military defense capabilities and it seeks to ensure its security. It is the EU that becomes the "odd man out," given that it is not a sovereign state or a federation of states, but some kind of a hybrid which, although does not have its own military (yet), pools its resources from other Member States. In using and coordinating said resources, it has

developed its own CIMIC doctrine, a process which reflects the changes in the European security environment and the "increasing importance of multilateral security solutions which added an international component to the idea of civil-military cooperation,"[1] moving further away from the traditional meaning of security. As such, CIMIC in the context of international operations is mainly "concerned with the enhancement of cooperation at the various civil-military interfaces in the operational context, including the relationship towards other collective actors deployed in the region concerned."[2]

The term CIMIC pertains to cooperation at operational and tactical levels "with the specific aim of connecting and making use of military capabilities in theatre for the coordination of and cooperation with national, international and non-governmental civilian actors."[3] The development of CIMIC at the EU level has been marked by two conferences. In June 2002 there was an EU CIMIC conference that strived to delimit the functions between civilian and military actors in crisis situations, including the formulation of guiding principles. While the first conference tackled political, strategic, and conceptual levels of the doctrine, the second EU CIMIC conference from June 2003 was more oriented towards the operational and tactical levels. The latter resulted in the drafting of a document concerned with generic guidelines that were presented as an initial step for further consultations between the actors involved.

It is important to note that the EU CIMIC concept was designed during the initial phase of development of the EU's foreign and security policy, at a time when the Union had not conducted any missions of its own and when harmonization of policies and capability sharing with NATO were strongly emphasized. Moreover, through the "Berlin Plus" arrangements,

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1 Carmen Gebhard, "Civil-military Coordination and Cooperation in the Context of the EU's Crisis Management. CMCO versus CIMIC: Conceptual and Terminological Clarifications," National Defense Academy, 2008, 3, https://www.bundesheer.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/info_akt_01_08_cimic_vers_cmco_cg.pdf.

2 Gebhard, *Civil-military Coordination*, 3.

3 Eva Gross, "EU and The Comprehensive Approach, Danish Institute for International Studies2008, 17-18, https://www.diis.dk/files/media/publications/import_efter1114/r2008-13_eu_and_the_comprehensive_ approach.pdf.

adopted on March 17, 2003, the EU was allowed to have access to NATO's collective assets and capabilities for EU-led operations in which NATO need not be involved for the EU to benefit from existing resources.

Therefore, the Union's official CIMIC concept owes to NATO its distinctively military-centered character for it has framed EU CIMIC in terms of mission primacy and support to the military commander,[4] without much mention of humanitarian principles. When specifying the principles of CIMIC, the Union reiterates NATO's provision that "every effort should be made to secure and retain the willing cooperation of civilian organizations with which the allied force deals"[5] but it adds an additional caveat, which is not found in the NATO doctrine. This provision states that "although not ultimately necessary, every effort should be made to secure the willing consent of external civilian organizations and local populations with which the EU military force is dealing."[6] However, the limits of CIMIC for a comprehensive coordination between civilian and military sides in EU's more complex missions stem precisely from the fact that the doctrine has been derived from a military perspective. In this regard, Khol argues that CIMIC becomes primarily concerned with force protection and cooperation with non-military actors is subordinated to that aim.[7] However, Dr. Gebhard believes that an in-depth analysis of CIMIC put into practice shows that "in line with its comprehensive approach to security, EU acts beyond traditional CIMIC conceptions in terms of their exclusive focus on the military support function of CIMIC. […] it is the mutual benefit of both military and external civil actors that remains central at all times for the EU."[8]

On paper, the EU follows the provisions proposed by NATO, but the application of CIMIC in the field assumes a different perspective, not

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4 Voluntary Organizations in Cooperation in Emergencies, "EU Crisis Management–A Humanitarian Perspective", Brussels, 2004, 7.

5 NATO, "NATO Civil-Military Co-Operation (CIMIC) Doctrine," Allied Joint Publication, June 2003, Ch. 3.

6 Council of the European Union and EU Military Staff, "EU Concept for Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) for EU-led Military Operations", 2008, ref. 5, Art. 22-f.

7 Radek Khol, "Civil-military Co-ordination in EU Crisis Management," in *Civilian Crisis Management: the EU Way*, ed. Agnieszka Nowak (Paris: The European Union Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot Paper No. 90, June 2006), 124.

8 Gebhard, "Civil-military Coordination," 3-4.

provided for in the official documents, one that resembles a civil-centered approach developed by another close ally of the EU, namely the UN. The definition for the main functions of CIMIC, provided by the UN, reflects the reality on the ground of EU led missions: "To support management of the operational and tactical interaction between military and civilian actors in all phases of peacekeeping operation; and (…) to support creating an enabling environment for the implementation of the mission mandate by maximizing the comparative advantage of all actors operating in the mission area."[9]

To make efficient use of its available resources and in line with its own security concepts, the EU incorporated both the doctrine it first adopted from NATO and the one brought forward by the UN. Its role as an actor with the capacity to bring forth a variety of instruments applied in crisis management operations has increased over the years and, with it, the need to adjust CIMIC to the unique institutional structure of the EU. To that end, the EU's comprehensive approach rests on the notion of Civil-Military Coordination (CMCO), its purpose defined as "addressing the need for effective coordination of the actions of all relevant EU actors involved in the planning and subsequent implementation of EU response to the crisis."[10]

CMCO is intrinsically linked to the institutional specificities of the EU as an external actor, with its separation of supranationally and intergovernmentally directed policies and the resulting fragmentation of its instruments for crisis management. The comparative advantage that the EU has in terms of its unique array of instruments for the management of crises and conflict, compared to other actors, is also the same factor that often prevents the Union from being entirely efficient as it causes inter-institutional incoherence. If a large set of instruments such as the one needed to conduct a civil-military mission is to be employed effectively, enhanced coordination at all levels and across all channels must be a prerequisite. CMCO attempts to solve that and it "represents an attempt to create an EU-wide culture of coordination for EU hybrid crisis management missions."[11]

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[9] UN DPKO and UN DFS, "Policy on Civil-Military Coordination in UN Integrated Peacekeeping Missions (UN-CIMIC)," 2010, ref. 8, art. 14.

[10] Council of the European Union, "Civil-military Co-ordination (CMCO) (14457/03)," 2003.

[11] Gebhard, "Civil-military Coordination," 5.

Simply put, CMCO is about internal coordination of EU structures in crisis management, both civil-civil and civil-military coordination and it is recognized as required at all levels of the management of crises. At the heart of CMCO lies the Crisis Management Concept (CMC), which constitutes the "conceptual framework describing the overall approach of the EU to the management of a particular crisis"[12]

For planning and carrying out a crisis management mission, the EU established a chain of command featuring three levels of joint headquarters which correspond to three levels of planning and implementation for a mission: the EU Military Staff for the strategic/pre-decision level; the actual EU Operation Headquarters (OHQ) for the planning and conduct level; and the Force Headquarters (FHQ) for the local level. To plan and run its missions, the EU can make use of the structures of NATO (e.g. NATO headquarters) to which it is granted access on the basis of the Berlin Plus arrangements. Another option is to use the HQs of EU framework nations who are actively involved in the mission (there are states such as France or Germany who volunteered their HQ for EU operations such as Operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003 or EUFOR Chad in 2006) or to create an entirely new Operation Centre within the EUMS. The latter is not to be understood as a permanent HQ of the EU for conducting missions because that is not the case. What it means is that the EU has the permanent available capacity to set up an urgent HQ for an operation if need be, since it has the necessary infrastructure, developed procedures and permanent staff within the Civ/Mil Cell.

At a procedural level, the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty made some changes in regard to the internal structures managing the operations on the ground. We shall briefly mention these as they are involved in the design and operation of the missions which are about to be discussed in the following pages.

We have already discussed the creation of the EEAS and its role. What is important to note is that the EEAS includes the Civilian Planning

[12] Council of the European Union, "EU Concept for Military Planning at the Political and Strategic Level," Doc. 10687/08, June 16, 2008, 10, http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st10/st10687.en08.pdf.

and Conduct Capability (CPCC), a body responsible for the provision of the planning structure for the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) and the EUMS. The CPCC has been responsible for EU missions and its staff is divided between Council officials and seconded national experts. The EEAS' s central administration is organized in Directorates-General and CPCC is, in fact, one of them. Working under the political control and strategic direction of the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the overall authority of the High Representative, the CPCC ensures the effective planning and conduct of civilian CSDP crisis management operations, as well as the proper implementation of all mission-related tasks.[13] Within CPCC, the civilian mission in Mali, designated as EUCAP Sahel-Mali, was given operational structure. Its sister, EUTM Mali, was planned within the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) structure. Together, CPCC and MPCC form the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD), which contributes to the objectives of the EEAS in the planning of CSDP civilian and military operations.

In what follows, we shall provide the context under which the Mali missions were deemed necessary to restore stability in the Sahel region.

Understanding the EU strategy for the Sahel

The European Union's current High Representative has recently pledged the support of the Union for the government of Mali and its people as the country undergoes a transition to an elected government following the 2020 military coup, declaring for the press that he "had the pleasure to see the President before the transition, to bring him the clear support of the EU to this civil transition."[14] He then added that "it's a transition that should be historical. It will serve as a basis for the new Mali, with a process and a

[13] EEAS, "Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) Structure, Instruments, Agencies," July 7, 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp/5392/csdp-structure-instruments-and-agencies_en.

[14] Africanews, "Europe Pledges Support to Mali Amid Transition to an Elected Government," April 25, 2021, https://www.africanews.com/2021/04/25/europe-pledges-support-to-mali-amid-ransition-to-an-elected-government/.

calendar that should be followed, with elections, structural reforms, and good governance. With these, Mali can count on the support of the European Union."[15] The support that the EU's foreign policy chief offered to Mali's top leaders during talks in Bamako is a continuation of the new EU Strategy for the Sahel, which affirms the importance of a solid and long-term partnership in the region through legislation and strategies. The question that is thus being raised is why the Sahel region would have any impact on the EU to the extent that is requires the Union's support?

The geopolitical significance of the Sahel and its challenges

The term *Sahel* commonly refers to the geographic area occupying the southern belt of the Sahara Desert, but the limits of this area are the cause of several disputes among scholars who have attempted to clearly establish the borders of the Sahel region. For the purpose of this paper, we shall focus on the approach adopted by the EU, which narrows down the Sahel region to include only the countries of Mauritania, Mali and Niger as the three most important Sahelian states. The approach includes parts of Burkina Faso and Chad as well (see Figure 1). Given its interdependence with Northern Africa, the Sahel represents an extension of the EU's southern geopolitical border which constitutes an area of real significance in terms of its stability and development but also due to the negative impact that any instability in the region can have on the borders of the Union and, consequently, on its security.

Unfortunately, the Sahel region is no stranger to instability, conflict escalation or lack of development. The entire Sahel region is characterized by the near total absence of state authority and its inhospitable geography and nomadic culture breed economic underdevelopment and state fragility, generating a safe haven for terrorist groups, drug trafficking, illegal immigration and other organized crime networks that threat Europe directly.[16] However, there are strategic interests at stake for the Union.

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[15] Africanews, "Europe Pledges Support."

[16] Directorate General for External Policies of the Union, "A Coherent EU Strategy for the Sahel," Belgium, 2012, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/studies.do?language=EN, 1.

Mauritania is an important source of iron ore imports, critical to Europe's steel industry, while Niger is the fourth largest uranium producer in the world, and it controls around 8,7% of global uranium production and provides 12% of the EU's consumption. To add to this, the Sahel region provides geostrategic depth to North Africa, West Africa and, more indirectly, the Red Sea Basin which means that the geopolitical dynamics defining the Sahel can spill into the EU's maritime borders in a variety of ways.[17]



Fig. 1. The Sahel Countries, according to the EU strategy for the region
Map by Samy Chahri, European Parliamentary Research Service Blog

Against this background, the EU Strategy for the Sahel was conceived in line with the EU's integrated approach that centers, as argued in the previous sections, on the idea that security, development and governance are inherently intertwined. The EU adopted its first strategy for the Sahel in 2011, later reinforcing it with its 2015-2020 regional action plan. These two documents outline the four key elements underpinning EU engagement in the region:

1. Security and development in the Sahel are inter-linked. Achieving security will enable the economies of the Sahel countries to grow and poverty to be reduced.

[17] "EU Strategy for Sahel."

2. Achieving security and development in the Sahel is only possible through closer regional cooperation, which is an area in which the EU has a potential role to play.
3. All the states of the region will benefit from capacity-building in the fields of governance, security and development cooperation.
4. The EU has an important role to play both in encouraging economic development for the people of the Sahel and helping them achieve security, while at the same time protecting the interests of EU citizens. [18]

To address the challenges identified in the Sahel region, the EU has adopted a comprehensive approach in line with its civil-military doctrines that we have previously discussed. This implies the use of an array of instruments to support political and diplomatic dialogue, security and stability, and development and humanitarian support.[19] The implementation of the Sahel strategy has been facilitated through diplomatic and political talks taking place in the context of the EU-G5 Sahel political partnership, which includes Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The discussions with the aforementioned countries have centered on strengthening regional cooperation and coordination on development, governance and security, but the dialogue is not limited to these countries.

The EU also extended its talks to regional partners such as the African Union and other local actors that include the civil society. The focus of the strategy started with Mali and the Union's efforts to restore state control and the rule of law in the country by developing measures centering on counter-terrorism actions, the control of frontiers and migration waves as well as capacity building in the security sector. When translating theory into practice, the EU's comprehensive approach for the Sahel region has identified seven tools at the EU's disposal, which are summarized below in Figure 2.

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[18] Isabelle Ioannides, "Peace and Security in 2020: Evaluating the EU Approach to Tackling the Sahel Conflicts," European Parliamentary Research Service, September 2020, 1, https://doi.org/10.2861/624225.

[19] Ioannides, "Peace and Security."

To implement its strategy, EU deployed two peace support operations in the Mali under the framework of CSDP missions: EUCAP Sahel Mali, a civilian mission launched in 2015 and extended until 2023 (as of January 2021) and EUTM Mali, a military mission that includes training, advising and offering direct support to security forces in Mali with the purpose of reinforcing national capacities. These two peace support operations will represent the focus of our next analysis.

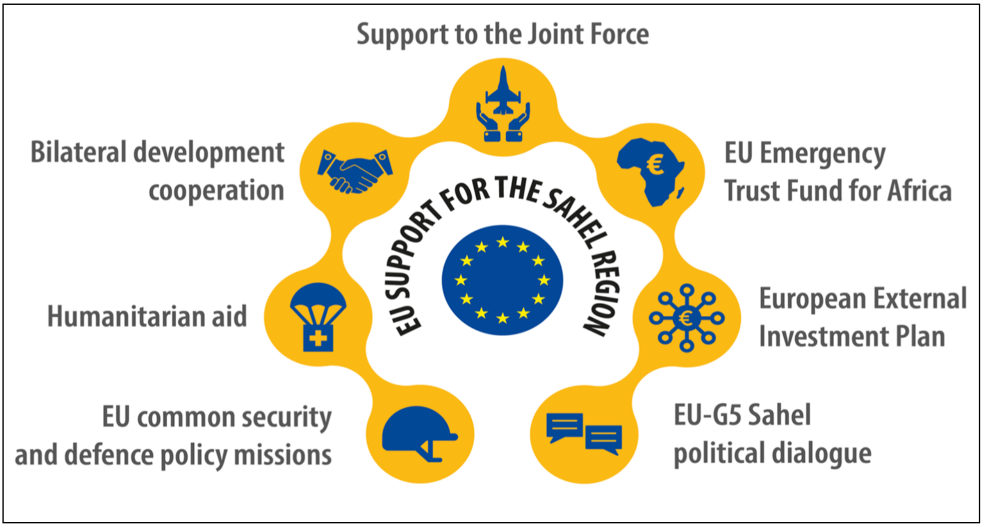


Fig. 2. EU Approach to Engaging in the Sahel Region
Source: Graphic by Samy Chahri, European Parliamentary Research Service Blog.

Breeding ground for instability – What happened with Mali?

Venturi, in its analysis of EU's involvement in the Sahel region, writes that the countries that make up the Sahel region "can be seen as representing a litmus test for the European Union's approach in Africa.[20] Furthermore, whether or not the EU will pass this test is subject to the actions that the European Commission will take in this direction, especially since

[20] Bernardo Venturi, "The EU and the Sahel: A Laboratory of Experimentation for the Security–Migration–Development Nexus," IAI Working Paper 17/38, Istituto Affari Internazionali, December 2017, https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiwp1738.pdf.

Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the Commission, has put Africa at the center of EU external action interests during her mandate.[21]

The instability that characterizes the country of Mali (as well as the rest of the Sahel countries) is partly due to the tensions and conflicts brought by armed groups who crossed into the region, running away from the consequences of incomplete peace processes in their home countries in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.[22] One such group is the Tuareg al-Qaeda fighters, armed with weapons from Gaddafi's arsenal, and which, following the fall of Libya, escaped to Mali. The Tuareg fighters later joined forces with the insurgents of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad[23] (MNLA) and with the Salafist Ansar Dine[24] group. Together, they led the 2012 insurrection in Mali which ultimately led to the military coup d'état from March 2012 that overthrew President Amadou Toumani Touré. This left large parts of the country with "ungoverned spaces,"[25] the control of which the government is unable to regain, despite the 2013 French-led Operation Serval – supported by the EU – to reconquer territories in the

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21 European Commission, "A Union that Strives for More: My Agenda for Europe by Candidate for President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen," Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2019-2024.

22 The Arab Spring was a wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings that took place in the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2010 and 2011, challenging some of the region's entrenched authoritarian regimes. The wave began when protests in Tunisia and Egypt toppled their regimes in quick succession, inspiring similar attempts in other Arab countries.

23 The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad or the Azawad National Liberation Movement is a political and military organization based in Azawad/northern Mali. The movement is made up of Tuareg rebels, some of whom fought in the Libyan army during the 2011 rebellion. For more details see https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/national-movement-liberation-azawad-mnla, accessed on June 14, 2021.

24 Ansar Dine is a paramilitary terrorist group of insurgents based in Northern Mali but operating throughout the country to impose Sharia law. Their primary operations are against the Mali military and opposing rebel groups. For more details see https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ansar-dine, accessed on June 14, 2021.

25 Aurelien Tobie and Boukary Sangaré, "The Impact of Armed Groups on the Populations of Central and Northern Mali: Necessary Adaptations of the Strategies for Re-establishing Peace," International Peace Research Institute, 2019, 29, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/1910_sipri_report_the_impact_of_armed_groups_on_the_populations_of_central_and_northern_mali_en_0.pdf.

north of Mali, the organization of elections and the negotiation of the peace deal known as the Algiers Accord from 2015.

The Malian Crisis can be seen as a twofold phenomenon: a security crisis in the North with the presence of armed groups and an institutional crisis followed by the coup d'état. The Malian Armed Forces, representing the military in Mali, failed to safeguard the territorial integrity of Mali and to ensure the protection of the population. The security situation in Mali is the result of the lack of State authority and the erosion of its defense capacity, in addition to the radicalization of movements in opposition to the central government.[26]

EU responds to crisis escalation in Mali

In light of the deteriorating security situation in Mali and the reported kidnappings of European nationals, the Foreign Affairs Council of 25 October 2010 tasked Catherine Ashton, the HR of the EU back then, and the Commission, with developing a regional strategy for the Sahel. In 2011, the EEAS presented a report detailing the strategy that we have previously discussed to the Council and advised that it would invest 167€ million in addition to the 660€ million allocated to the region under the tenth European Development Fund. However, because of the outburst of the Libyan crisis, the implementation of the Sahel Strategy was delayed by six months, but the coup d'état represented a harsh reminder for the Union of the instability in the region and the HR was once again tasked by the Foreign Affairs Council to accelerate the implementation of the Sahel Strategy to respond to the crisis.

Part of this process was the approval of the CMC, lying at the heart of EU's CMCO strategy that we have previously discussed. A draft CMC for the EU Training Mission in Mali was adopted on 10 December 2012 and foresaw the deployment of around 200 instructors for an initial period of 15 months and excluded involvement in combat operations.[27] However, due to

[26] Moussa Djiré et al., "Assessing the EU's Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Interventions in Mali," WOSCAP, 2017, 13, https://issat.dcaf.ch/download/142348/2917218/Assessing%20the%20EU's%20conflict%20prevention%20and%20peacebuilding%20interventions%20in%20Mali.pdf.

[27] European Council, "Council Conclusions on Mali," Brussels, December 10, 2012.

the escalation of conflict in Mali and the failure of France's intervention in 2013 (diplomatically backed by the EU), a decision was made to raise the personnel numbers for EUTM Mali to 500 non-combat troops and 200 soldiers[28] and the budget of the operation was doubled while its mandate was made more robust.

The European strategy for Mali was unique at the time when it was developed and implemented. For the first time, the EU established a comprehensive approach that included all of the instruments that the Union took pride in: a combination of soft power tools, inclusion of civilian actors and training of the local police – all for the purpose of providing Mali with the tools it needed to restore security on its own as well as maintain it. The innovations brought by the Lisbon Treaty also played an important role in the development of the missions since the treaty expanded the range of instruments that the CSDP operations could make use of. Mali was the first country on whose territory the EU deployed two missions simultaneously and which benefitted from five different diplomatic instruments: 1. a delegation, 2. an advisor to the EU Representative in the Sahel, 3. EUTM (European Union Training Mission, 4. EUCAP (European Capacity Building Mission), 5. ECHO (European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Office). We will briefly assess the mandates of the two missions, their objectives and some achievements & limitations. These will allow us to draw conclusions and make some comparisons in the following and final section.

EUTM Mali

The military EU Training Mission was the first mission deployed in Mali, in January 2013, at the request of the Malian government and in accordance with the existing resolutions drafted by the UN. More specifically, UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2071 had called directly on regional and international organizations, including the EU, to provide coordinated assistance, expertise, training and support for the development of the Malian armed security forces to restore state authority.

[28] European Council, "Council Conclusions on Mali," Brussels, December 17, 2013.

The Council responded and requested, as detailed before, for the HR and EEAS to establish a mission to train the Malian Armed Forces (MaAF) under the CSDP framework. The first mandate for the mission was decided upon in January 2013 and since then, it has been renewed four times. The latest mandate, that is the fifth one, was adopted in May 2020. EUTM Mali is encouraged in its actions by UN as well, through the MINUSMA-related resolutions.[29]

EUTM Mali has its headquarters in Bamako and was deployed in the south of the country (the military regions of Mopti, Ségou, the southern bank of the Niger River, and the cities of Gao and Timbuktu). It is composed of almost 600 soldiers from 25 European countries, including 21 EU Member States and 4 non-EU partners.[30] Germany and Italy are the two countries that deployed most of the staff, with the Czech Republic, Ireland and Belgium following suit. However, it is France that plays the most important role in the operation and is seen as the leading nation in the mission.[31]

The political control of the mission is exercised by the Council and it is carried out through the HR/VP for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The functions of the mission commander are fulfilled by the Political and Security Committee Director of MPCC, who also exercises the military direction and reports to the EUMS at regular intervals while benefitting from the support of the staff located at the HQ in Bamako.

The purpose of the mission, as officially stated in the report of EEAS, is to "assist he Malian Armed Forces in restoring their military capacity with a view to enabling them to conduct military operations aiming at restoring Malian territorial integrity and reducing the threat posed by terrorist groups,

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29 The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established by the Security Council resolution 2100 of April 25, 2013 to support political processes in that country and carry out a number of security-related tasks. For more details, see the official UN website for MINUSMA: https://minusma.unmissions.org/en/about-minusma.

30 For further information, see the EUTM website: https://eutmmali.eu/factsheet/.

31 Ingo Peters et al., "Lessons to be Learned from the EU Crisis Response in the Extended Neighbourhood: EU Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan, Iraq and Mali," Freie Universität Berlin, October 5, 2018, 8, http://www.eunpack.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09_D7.9_Article%20on%20lessons%20learned%20from%20EU%20crisis%20response%20in%20the%20extended%20neighbourhood.pdf.

and to provide military assistance to the G5 Sahel Joint Force as well as national armed forces in the G5 Sahel countries."[32] However, EUTM Mali does not have the mandate to intervene in combat operations and it is limited to training and advising capacities. The mission's main activities are carried out by an Advisory Task Force (ATF) and an Educational and Training Task Force (ETTF). The former is located in Bamako and it is the unit responsible for advising and training the personnel of the Ministry of Defense, the General Staffs of the Army and the HQ of the Military Regions while the latter is based at Koulikoro Training Camp (KTC) and provides training to the Units and supports training at the Military Education Centers with the aim of improving the leadership and operational management skills of Malian and non-commissioned officers.[33]

At the outset of the process of establishing EUTM, there were some divergences between the EU and the Malian army officers as to what the priorities for military support should be. According to a senior Malian officer "in August 2012, and EU delegation met with me to establish we needed in terms of training given the current Malian context."[34] He added, "in the short-term, our need was essentially for air support and specific training in air reconnaissance in the area of air conflict. However, the EU was proposing the implementation of a training mission for the Mali military. […] At that time, the EUTM was not compatible with the specific needs of the Malian Army and the GTIA (Special Intervention Groups), conceptualized for the purposes of pushing back the enemy in a pitched battle."[35] The positions of the Malian authorities and the EU eventually found common ground and the idea of an EU military training mission gained traction. The chosen course was to train Special Intervention Groups (GTIA) with battalions of 500 to 600 men. The EUTM training content is entirely defensive and not offensive. In

[32] EEAS, "European Union Training Mission in Mali," January 13, 2021, 1, https://eutmmali.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/EUTM_Mission_Factsheet_EV2021.pdf.
[33] EEAS, "EU Training Mission," 2.
[34] Djiré et al., "EU's Conflict Prevention," 41.
[35] Djiré et al., "EU's Conflict Prevention," 41.

addition to tactical training, modules on International Humanitarian Law, human rights and the protection of civilians were also taught.[36]

Upon their training, the GTIA are deployed to operations related to the securitization of the territory and the population, while some return to their original battalions. Those who are deployed on the ground continue to receive technical support from EUTM to allow them to access the knowledge they have acquired during their training, should they need it, as well as to receive guidance in case they need to adjust their strategy on the ground. Colonel Nouhoum M. Traoré explains that: "Following the deployment of GTIA Waraba to the North, certain shortcomings were recorded, such as response in the face of danger, and the detection of mine […] To correct these, GTIA Waraba returned to undergo additional training."[37] He declares that the EUTM training has rendered positive results in the performance of the Malian military on the ground.[38]

Overall, the EUTM trainings played an important role in improving the skill level of the soldiers. Several interviews conducted by the authors of the research report "Assessing the EU's Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Interventions in Mali" revealed certain drawbacks in the operational structure of the mission. They concluded that the EUTM staff should have focused more on the existent local expertise and adapt their trainings to the Malian context. Furthermore, the trainers were not all equally skilled and qualified while the procedures provided by some MS participating in the mission differed from others and they were not cohesive.[39]

Lastly, given the military nature of the mission, EUTM also includes an expert Advisory Support Mission which was implemented alongside the training of the troops. Its objective is to render advisory support in elaborating military doctrine on the use of force for the Malian Army but

[36] Djiré et al., "EU's Conflict Prevention," 41.
[37] Djiré et al., "EU's Conflict Prevention," 44.
[38] Djiré et al., "EU's Conflict Prevention," 44.
[39] Djiré et al., "EU's Conflict Prevention," 43.

setting out general strategic policies and providing human resource direction as well as planning in emergency contexts.

EUCAP Sahel Mali

The EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali is a civilian mission that was launched in Bamako in January 2015, at the request of the Malian authorities. The mission provides experts in strategic advice and training to the Malian Police, Gendarmerie and National Guard and to the relevant ministries in order to support reform in the security sector. The mission numbers a staff of almost 220 (140 Europeans and 54 Malians) with the participation of 15 EU MS and 3 non-EU partners. Its budget for 2018 was 28€ million and with the most recent mandate renewal, it has received another 61€ million.[40]

The command and control of EUCAP Sahel Mali is exercised by the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability Director, under the political control and strategic management of the PSC and overall authority of the HR.[41]

The activities of the mission come in response to the crisis and instability that characterize the Malian authority and they aim to support the Malian state in modernizing its security forces as well as enabling the governmental authorities to respond more effectively to the need for protection of the entire Malian population. More specifically, the mission:

1. Trains officials and experts in the gendarmerie and police[42];
2. Works on capacity building in counterterrorism, organized crime and integrated border management;
3. Assists the return of the Malian forces in the weakened regions of the center and the north of the country;

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[40] Europa Nu, "EUCAP Sahel Mali: Mission Extended until 31 January 2023 and Mandate Adjusted," January 2021, https://www.europanu.nl/id/vlfdgqchqxz2/nieuws/eucap_sahel_mali_missie_verlengd_ tot_en?ctx=vhshnf7snxu9&tab=0.

[41] European Council, "Council Decision on the EU CSDP Mission in Mali," March 19, 2014, 6, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/st_7465_2014_init_en.pdf.

[42] Ioannides, "Peace and Security," 24.

4. Ensures the inclusion of human rights and gender in all training material and courses;
5. Coordinates its action with other international actors present on the ground, notably the EUTM mission and the police component of MINUSMA, and
6. Is increasingly opening its activities to the participation of other G5 Sahel countries.[43]

European experts, together with representative from the National Police, the National Guard and the Gendarmerie developed a joint training program for the internal security sector, which resulted in the design of three training modules that the Malian police would take part in: high-level training for commissioners, training of cadres for inspectors and local training for non-commissioned officers.[44]

In order to promote local ownership, the mission also trains trainers who, in turn, pass on the training outcomes to future trainees. The commanders of the forces select the staff who will take the EUCAP training, with the support of the training advisers.

EUCAP also delivers logistical resources that complement the training modules. It provides the police with support in digitalizing the archives and the database containing personnel details. The security services have been equipped with computers and systems for storing data as well as with an upgrade to the biometric control system for the staff. The training modules, compared to the ones designed under EUTM, focus on conceptualization and theoretical approaches. The training covers subjects such as management and command, professional ethics, human rights and gender equality, intelligence techniques, professional intervention, criminal policing, counterterrorism and public order. It is primarily addressed at

[43] Council of the European Union, "EUCAP Sahel Mali: mission prolongée jusqu'au 14 janvier 2021, budget de €67 million adopté" [EUCAP Sahel Mali Mission Extended until January 14, 2021, Budget of €67 Million Adopted], February 21, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/eucap-sahel-mali_fr.

[44] Djiré et al., "EU's Conflict Prevention", 44.

senior and intermediate staff. Each member of staff receives individual training lasting 100 hours over 4 weeks.[45]

However, there are certain difficulties the mission staff encountered in its interaction with the local police and administration; these are the consequence of linguistic barriers between non-Francophone trainers and the officers undergoing training. Naturally, such barriers have an impact on the process of delivering the actual trainings and their efficacy. In line with the same obstacle identified within EUTM, there are also differences between the approaches that trainers adopt in delivering the modules which leads to insufficient coordination and coherence in their trainings for the Malian staff.

To achieve its objectives in Mali, the Council has established a regional coordination cell (RCC) within the EUCAP Sahel Mali: made up of a network of EU experts on internal security and on defense in each of the G5 Sahel countries. These Internal security and defense experts collect information on security and defense issues in their host countries with which they communicate, and where appropriate, make recommendations to the head of the RCC. This provides more coherence within the bigger strategy for the Sahel region and approaches taken in respect to each of the G5 countries.

Conclusions

Upon closely analyzing the strategy that the EU has developed for the Sahel region in order to address the security issues plaguing the G5 countries, we can definitely argue that it represents the Union's first attempt to design a comprehensive regional strategy. This is the reason why it has been particularly chosen as the topic for this article as it embodies the evolution of the Union as an actor with legal personality in international relations and, more importantly, as a key player in conflict prevention and crisis management operations. The principles and values that the EU stands by can be clearly seen in the objectives it set out in the strategy: the

[45] More information can be found at https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/eucap-sahel-mali/3900/about-eucap-sahel-mali_en.

prevention of terrorist attacks, the protection of trade and communication links, the preservation of existing and prospective economic interests, the promotion of human rights and the rule of law.

The Sahel strategy acknowledges that security and development are interdependent: one cannot be accomplished without securing the other first. The complexity of the challenges identified in the Sahel countries demand a regional and coherent response which is reflected in the Union's approach and its close collaboration with representatives of all G5 countries as well as in its talks with both local actors as well as other international organizations involved in the regions such as the UN, ECOWAS or the African Union. The Sahel Strategy designated Mali as the most important aid recipient in the region.

The EU's response to the gradual crisis escalation in this country has been at times too slow to respond efficiently to the rising tensions that led to the March 2012 coup d'état. This is a reflection of the usual internecine wars inside the EU bureaucracy and of the cumbersome internal procedures that slow down institutional coordination. Nonetheless, the EU acknowledged the urgency of the political situation in Mali and accelerated the process of deploying a mission there to respond to the crisis. The comprehensive outlook of the two missions was in line with the scope of the recently operational EEAS to enhance the coherence of EU external action.

The pooling of resources of Member States was, however, imbalanced, with France being the leading European nation in all arenas: diplomatic, military and economic. This can be easily understood given France's economic interests in the regions as well as the historical ties it has with its former colonies. On a positive note, the renewal of the mandates for both missions proves the continuous support of the EU for enhancing stability in the Sahel region, but the way the crisis response was formulated also reflects the collective preference of the EU for African solutions to African problems. This translates into the mandates given to the missions and their objective to train the local police so that in turn they can extend their learnings to others in the security sector.

The Sahel Strategy and the two Mali missions have shown that the first EU comprehensive strategy for the region was aimed at converging various external policy programs and instruments towards common objectives. The chosen approach was in line with the CMCO doctrine that EU developed over the years while the overall evolution of the missions has shown that significant progress has been made in the region while challenges remain. Positive developments have taken place not only within the region but also with respect to the overall coherence of EU action – seen as one of the achievements of the missions. As a flagship project of the EEAS, the Sahel strategy has been receiving a high degree of political as well as bureaucratic attention. However, while the missions have been successful in the area of crisis management, they have failed when it comes to conflict prevention. Neither the first coup d'état from 2012 nor the more recent one from 2020 were prevented, but the financial aid given to the country and the trainings offered in the security sector are instruments that the EU has used to compensate for its lack of response in conflict prevention.

In conclusion, the Union has shown that it can operate as a rule generator, exporting its own norms and principles, but participating in the creation and enforcement of norms and principles on a larger scale too (e.g. within the UN), even fostering ideas of justice and inclusiveness. Furthermore, the EU has performed the role of stabilizer, exporting cardinal values such as the rule of law and fundamental rights, seeking to ensure cohesion, stability and democracy in third countries, promoting international law and multilateral solutions, and placing emphasis on the importance of regional linkages.

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NATO as the Necessary Pillar of 21st Century Global Security

AUREL BRAUN

COVID-19 has not only brought dire suffering and devastating death worldwide, but it has also highlighted and amplified the negative elements of international institutions, processes, and old and new fissures. It definitely illuminated how globalized the international system has become, and how permeable sovereignty may be in a crisis. It also disports how it is essential to put NATO and its role in a larger context and a deeper perspective in order to test and understand the Alliance's function and prospects. It is for such reasons that I want to bring a broad brush to my analysis while conscious of the key modalities in a world that at times is seized both by angst and anger.

Throughout, the regional blends with the global, but the regional itself is multidimensional and contentious. When it comes to NATO, American President Trump has questioned its relevance,[1] French President Macron has disparaged its acuity,[2] and Russia's President Putin has essentially designated it as his country's primary enemy.[3] Yet, the Alliance, now in its eight decade, perseveres. Contrary to pessimists or cynics, it is not

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1 Eileen Sullivan, "Trump Questions the Core of NATO: Mutual Defense, Including Montenegro," *The New York Times*, July 18, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/18/world/europe/trump-nato-self-defense-montenegro.html.

2 *The Economist*, "Emmanuel Macron Warns Europe: NATO Is Becoming Brain-dead," November 7, 2019, https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead.

3 Vladimir Putin, "Speech to the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly," September 28, 2015, New York, USA, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/50385; "Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 02.07.2021 № 400 "О Стратегии национальной безопасности Российской Федерации," [The Russian Federation's 2021 National Security Strategy], Moscow, Kremlin, 2021, http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202107030001, accessed August 8, 2021.

some expensive and troublesome relic of the Cold War and of the erstwhile confrontational 20th century. More than just the longest lasting alliance in history, NATO has demonstrated remarkable resiliency and adaptability; as a political and military organization, it has the potential to make the vital transatlantic link more organic, enhance the multidimensional well-being of all its 30 members, enhance regional security, and, through its out-of-area participation, further the stability of the global order. Moreover, NATO can do this in tandem with and in overlapping cooperation with the European Union. That is the vibrant potential of NATO; it is not a guarantee of success, but rather an opportunity that could have true practical meaning.

NATO's "footprint"

Though Alliance longevity clearly speaks to perseverance and adaptation, it does not explain why a defense organization that began as a regional entity should be a necessary pillar of global security. Perhaps the best way to appreciate why this is no mere regional phenomenon but rather a capstone achievement is to begin by looking at the size of NATO's footprint in the international system.

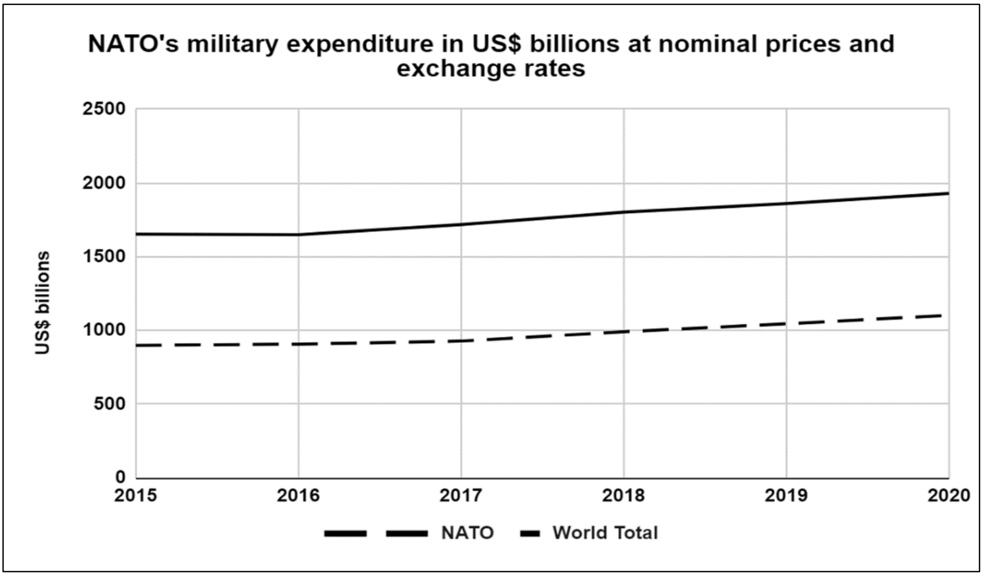


Fig. 1.

There are two measurements that readily elucidate the pivotal role of NATO in the international system. First, looking at military expenditures, just over the past five years, we can see that NATO defense expenditures at nominal prices and exchange rates have been consistently over 50% of total global spending (Fig. 1).

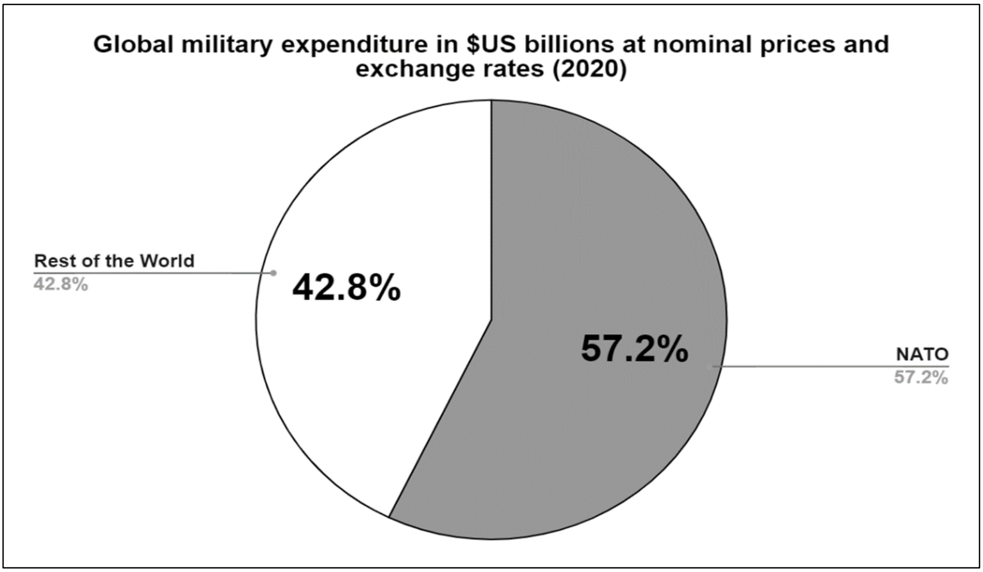


Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 above shows that between 2015 and 2020 Alliance outlays kept pace with growth in global defense spending. In the year 2020, again at nominal prices and exchange rates, NATO military expenditures amounted to a dominant 57.2% of the world total. Second, looking at another key measurement, GDP, we can again see how enormous a footprint NATO countries occupy collectively within the global economy. Measured by nominal exchange rates, as shown in Fig. 3, the collective NATO states' output in 2020 came to 47% of the world's total. If we use purchasing power parity, (which is more of a theoretical formulation rather than actually market-determined exchange rates), NATO's collective output is a little less, but still comes in at a dominant 43.4% of the global total, as shown in Fig. 4.

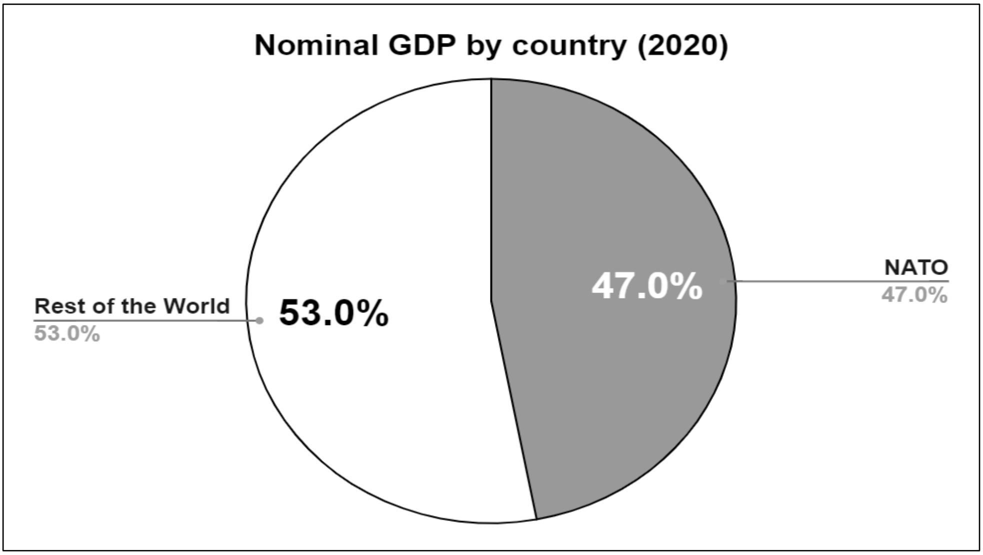


Fig. 3.

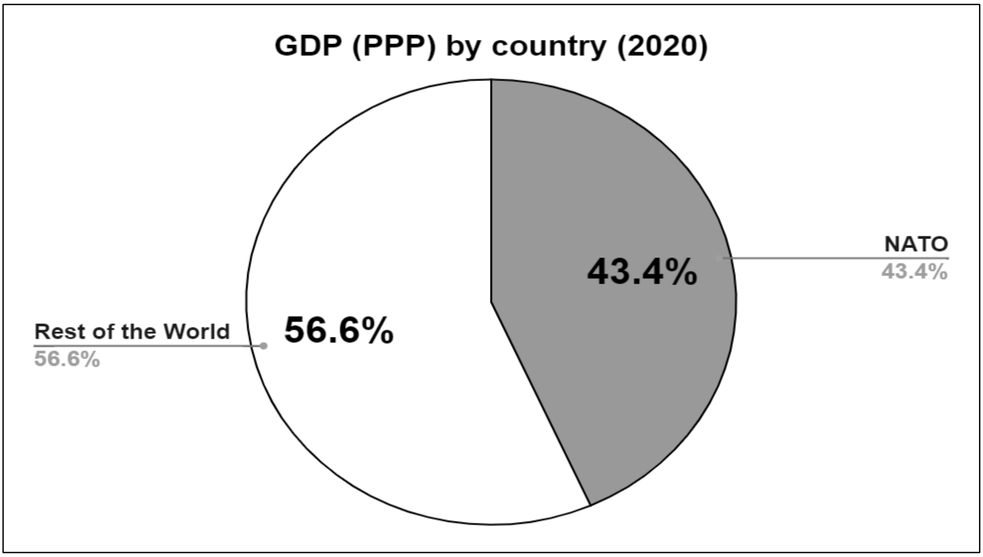


Fig. 4.

Consequently, whether we use defense expenditures as a measurement or GDP, no other entity, and no other grouping of countries comes remotely close to producing such a large share of the global total. Further, since most NATO states are democracies, (even if there has been some worrisome regression in Turkey, Poland and Hungary), the Alliance is

more than just indispensable internationally; in some respects, it is politically and ideologically insurmountable. Any discussion or assessment or global security consequently cannot ignore the central role that NATO currently occupies within the international system.

Of course, if NATO is to successfully cooperate with the EU and to meaningfully and pivotally contribute to a secure global order, it needs to remain internally cohesive and continually adaptive while it preserves its core principles. Founded as a political and military alliance primarily to counter the threat of the Soviet Union in 1949, it has both grown and evolved dramatically. As we get deeper into the 21st century, threats and needs, as well, have evolved significantly. The Soviet Union is gone, Russia is but a remnant of that hegemonic Marxist-Leninist empire and it is not threatening Western democracies with an expansionist universalistic ideology or attractive economic models, or for that matter, significant political ideas. Nonetheless, Russia is a **dissatisfied and disruptive power** that does present a military threat to some of the states on its periphery, alternating from assertiveness to aggressiveness as it continually shrinks its domestic zone of democracy. It is often also a disruptive and opportunistic power globally.

The continuing Russian challenge

Not entirely surprising, in light of Russian assertiveness and hybrid aggressive acts, including information warfare, the sounds and symbols of a new Cold War seem to permeate a good deal of the international discourse and interaction. Russian warplanes are dangerously challenging and probing American and NATO aircraft and warships from the Baltic to the Black Sea.[4] Russian subs pose new challenges while Moscow is massively building or reactivating military bases in the strategically vital and environmentally fragile Arctic.[5] In the Middle East, Russia has reinserted

[4] Ivan Watson and Sebastian Shukla, "Russian Fighter Jets 'Buzz' US Warship in Black Sea, Photos Show," CNN, February 16, 2017, https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/16/us/russia-us-ship-fly-by/index.html.

[5] Andrew Osborn, "Putin's Russia in Biggest Arctic Military Push since Soviet Fall," Reuters, January 30, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-arctic-insight/putins-russia-in-biggest-arctic-military-push-since-soviet-fall-idUSKBN15E0W0.

itself into Syria in a dramatic way and is seeking to supplant the USA throughout the region.[6] Russian summits with Turkey and Iran and the "bromance" between presidents Putin and Erdogan reinforce a seemingly indelible image of a Kremlin on the march.

Further, the rhetoric from Moscow and Washington is quite troubling. In February 2016, at the Munich Conference, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev complained that "we have slid back into a new Cold War – almost every day we are called one of the most terrible of threats by NATO or Europe or the U.S."[7] This is somewhat ironic since it was Russia, using hybrid warfare, that illegally annexed Crimea and continues to fund, arm, and direct separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine. American Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, also in February 2016 starkly noted that, "we haven't had to worry about this [the threat of a Russian attack or interference] for 25 years and I wish it were otherwise; but now we do."[8] The investigations which revealed evidence of Russian interference in the 2016 American elections[9] and allegations that Russia used a nerve agent to try to assassinate a former spy residing in Britain[10] likewise heighten tensions and fuel new suspicions.

Nonetheless, political rhetoric and provocations aside, to suggest that we are actually in a new Cold War is an exaggeration. Except for its nuclear arsenal, Russia has no superpower capability, nor possesses a universalistic ideology. The threat of nuclear Armageddon and of a nuclear winter have

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[6] Bethan McKernan and Oliver Carroll, "Vladimir Putin's Diplomatic Push in Middle East Seals both Syria's Fate and Diminishing Role of the US in the Region," *The Independent*, November 23, 2017, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/putin-syria-assad-civil-war-middle-east-syria-us-isis-rebels-turkey-iran-iraq-role-a8072036.html.

[7] David Rising, "Russia PM Accuses NATO of Restarting the Cold War," *Global News*, February 13, 2016, https://globalnews.ca/news/2516057/russia-pm-accuses-nato-of-restarting-the-cold-war.

[8] U.S. Department of Defense Press Operations, "Remarks by Secretary Carter on the Budget at the Economic Club of Washington, D.C.," February 2, 2016, https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/648901/remarks-by-secretary-carter-on-the-budget-at-the-economic-club-of-washington-dc/.

[9] Robert S. Mueller, "Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election," U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., 2019, accessed August 8, 2021.

[10] BBC News, "Russian Spy: Nerve Agent 'Used to Try to Kill' Sergei Skripal," March 7, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-43323847.

receded, and in terms of conventional warfare, the West is not facing scores of Russian divisions ready to rush across the Fulda Gap. Russia's overall capabilities are severely limited, given that it has a GDP that in nominal terms only matches Italy's.[11] Rather than a new Cold War, there has been a return, as Walter Russell Mead suggested, to geopolitics.[12]

Still, Russia remains a problem. If the *National Security Strategy* put in place by Russia in 2015,[13] following the Kremlin's attack on Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea, reflected the deterioration of relations with NATO and the West in general, the new *National Security Strategy* published on July 2, 2021[14] indicates a grave escalation in tensions. Mark Galeotti, perhaps somewhat harshly, called it "the paranoid's charter."[15] A little more charitably, Dmitri Trenin suggested that it was a "remarkable document" that is much more than an update of the 2015 version (which already reflected a significant deterioration of relations with the West following the events of 2014).[16] He rightly points out that in the 2021 document the key focus is on Russia itself and, crucially, that it is a blend of both domestic and foreign variables coming three decades after the dissolution of the USSR.

The overall theme now is that Russia is encircled and threatened. The West is portrayed as unrelentingly hostile. The National Security document castigates Western countries for trying to "preserve their hegemony."[17] It

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11 International Monetary Fund, "World Economic Outlook Database," April 2021.

12 Walter Russell Mead, "The Return of Geopolitics; The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers," *Foreign Affairs*, June 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2014-04-17/return-geopolitics.

13 "The Russian Federation's National Security Strategy," Moscow, Kremlin, 2015, http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf, accessed August 8, 2021.

14 "Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 02.07.2021 № 400 "О Стратегии национальной безопасности Российской Федерации." [The Russian Federation's 2021 National Security Strategy].

15 Mark Galeotti, "New National Security Strategy Is a Paranoid's Charter," *The Moscow Times*, July 5, 2021, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/07/05/new-national-security-strategy-is-a-paranoids-charter-a74424.

16 Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's National Security Strategy: A Manifesto for a New Era," *Carnegie Moscow Center*, July 6, 2021, https://carnegie.ru/commentary/84893.

17 "Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 02.07.2021 № 400 "О Стратегии национальной безопасности Российской Федерации." [The Russian Federation's 2021 National Security Strategy].

further accuses the West, though somewhat more indirectly, of additional nefarious goals, "the actions of some countries are aimed at inspiring disintegration processes in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in order to destroy Russia's ties with its allies. A number of states call Russia a traditional threat and even a military opponent... Space and information spaces are being actively developed as new spheres of warfare."[18]

Whereas in the 2015 document, relations with NATO are viewed as salvageable, with Russia even expressing an interest in working on the development of relations with the Alliance,[19] in 2021 Moscow evinces no such hope or interest. On the contrary, the 2021 document alleges that the Alliance "attempts to exert pressure on Russia, its allies and partners, [and] the buildup of the military infrastructure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization near the Russian borders, the intensification of intelligence activities, the practice of using large military formations and nuclear weapons against the Russian Federation contribute to the strengthening of military dangers and military threats to the Russian Federation."[20]

Moscow's view, as expressed in the 2021 document, is at least as harsh when it comes to the United States. The Kremlin deplores the decision by Washington to renounce obligations in the field of arms control and then attacks the development and potential of the global missile defense system, as well as the deployment of medium and shorter-range missiles in Europe and in the Asia-Pacific region which it claims "pose a threat to strategic stability and international security."[21] In essence, the Kremlin asserts that the West and NATO use a type of "sword and shield" approach with missile defense,

[18] "Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 02.07.2021 № 400 "О Стратегии национальной безопасности Российской Федерации." [The Russian Federation's 2021 National Security Strategy].

[19] Elizabeth Buchanan, "Russia's 2021 National Security Strategy: Cool Change Forecasted for the Polar Regions," RUSI, July 14, 2021, https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/russias-2021-national-security-strategy-cool-change-forecasted-polar-regions.

[20] "Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 02.07.2021 № 400 "О Стратегии национальной безопасности Российской Федерации." [The Russian Federation's 2021 National Security Strategy].

[21] "Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 02.07.2021 № 400 "О Стратегии национальной безопасности Российской Федерации." [The Russian Federation's 2021 National Security Strategy].

providing the West with protection while it aggressively pushes offensive weapons and military maneuvers and deployment on Russia's borders.

In key ways, then, the 2021 National Security Strategy represents both continuity and major escalation. Russian national defense remains primordial and so does the hierarchy of foreign relations, but vitally there is a new reference to the importance of information security.[22] It is somewhat ironic that Moscow, which has engaged in large-scale use of cyber warfare, disinformation, and hybrid methods, should now claim to be defending its information security. It is, moreover, also part of a larger goal and program of protecting and promoting Russian "traditional values." The 2021 document claims that not only is the Western liberal model in a crisis but some states "are making attempts to purposefully dilute traditional values, distort world history, revise views on the role and place of Russia in it… Information campaigns are being conducted aimed solely at forming a hostile image of Russia, the use of the Russian language, the activities of Russian mass media and information resources…"[23] Further, it asserts that "unfriendly countries are trying to use socio-economic problems in the Russian federation to destroy its internal unity, inspire and radicalize the protest movement, support the marginal and split Russian society."[24] Now, Moscow claims that it defends nothing less than the very sanctity of the people of Russia and their traditions.[25]

Additionally, in a strange melding of amnesia and paranoia, the document deplores that "Russian athletes are prohibited, the Russian Federation is unreasonably accused of violating international obligations, conducting computer attacks, interfering in the internal affairs of foreign

[22] Nivedita Kapoor, "Russia's New National Security Strategy," Observer Research Foundation, July 7, 2021, https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/russias-new-national-security-strategy/.

[23] "Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 02.07.2021 № 400 "О Стратегии национальной безопасности Российской Федерации." [The Russian Federation's 2021 National Security Strategy].

[24] "Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 02.07.2021 № 400 "О Стратегии национальной безопасности Российской Федерации." [The Russian Federation's 2021 National Security Strategy].

[25] Kapoor, "Russia's New National Security Strategy."

states."[26] There is no admission or apparent awareness that Russian athletes have been found by world sports organizations to engage in systematic drug use,[27] that Russia invaded Ukraine, that it has been credibly accused of using cyber war and it was found to have engaged in the election interference.[28]

Whether the 2021 document is "remarkable" or an exercise in "paranoia" by an aging Kremlin leadership, what is essential to recognize is the close link between domestic and foreign issues and goals. The emphasis on preserving and promoting Russian culture, especially as an alternative to Western democracy, is irretrievably connected to safeguarding against external threats, real or imagined. Russian foreign policy or military strategy thus cannot be understood in isolation.

Intractable Russian domestic drivers of foreign policy

Consequently, to comprehend the Russian threat and the pivotal issues in the Russia-West relations, it is essential to appreciate the driving forces in Russia, for as much as the West is hardwired to negotiate, the Kremlin looks at international interchange and dialogue in quite a different fashion. The primary reason for this has to do with Russian domestic policy. This is not meant to suggest, though, that Russian foreign policy is just domestic policy by other means. As in the case of other states, Russian foreign policy naturally starts at home. For instance, Richard Haass, using an old theme, with perhaps a different intonation to Henry Brandon's perceptive observation, entitled his 2013 book *Foreign Policy Begins at Home*.[29] What is rather different with Moscow is how extremely tightly the external and domestic variables are intertwined and just how profoundly the latter shape the former. In particular, key domestic crises are prime motor forces

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[26] "Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 02.07.2021 № 400 "О Стратегии национальной безопасности Российской Федерации." [The Russian Federation's 2021 National Security Strategy].

[27] Rebecca R. Ruiz and Michael Schwirtz, "Russian Insider Says State-Run Doping Fueled Olympic Gold," *The New York Times*, May 12, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/13/sports/russia-doping-sochi-olympics-2014.html.

[28] Mueller, "Report."

[29] Richard N. Haass, *Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America's House in Order* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

that drive certain foreign policy imperatives of current Russian foreign policy, including in the Arctic.

The four domestic crises

In fact, Russian foreign policy is impelled to a very large extent by four intertwined current and impending crises. These are comprised of a political legitimacy crisis, an economic crisis, an identity crisis, and a succession crisis. This assessment is certainly not meant to suggest that the collapse of the current Russian political order and the Putinite system are imminent. Rather, it should afford us an opportunity to better evaluate Russian policies. I would argue, essentially, that Russian pressure directly against neighboring states, and in various parts of the world, is pivotally determined by the four types of crises noted above, each driven by various degrees of immediacy.

First, the political legitimacy crisis is closely linked with the economic crisis. Bereft of an organizing universal ideology that the Soviet Union had espoused, Russia under Vladimir Putin has relied on a tacit social contract which offered the Russian people economic progress, political stability and renewed international pride in exchange for acquiescence to centralized political rule in an ever-shrinking zone of democracy. Essentially, what Mr. Putin sought was *modernization without democratization* (while at the same time he and his cohorts could and have greatly enriched themselves). Whether this was to be labeled 'directed democracy' or an 'illiberal democracy,' it was essentially a negation of democracy. While the economy grew in Russia, there was a significant trickle-down economic effect, which, despite the spectacular enrichment of oligarchs and vast systemic corruption, also improved the standard of living of the middle and working classes.

In addition, the Kremlin combined repression with something that surpasses the normal personality cult. The closest analogy one may find to this is in literature, particularly in the books of the great novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez, who so effectively used the literary device of magical realism. In literature, magical realism combines elements of the rational with the fantastic to create a potent image and convey a powerful message. In

current Russian politics, we see something similar, which we may call Political Magical Realism (PMR). PMR also conveys a message and entices the practitioner to believe in its effectiveness by dazzling the population, but in politics, in fact it means the systematic avoidance of dealing with fundamental problems. Yet PMR is precisely what Mr. Putin has begun to practice a number of years ago. Russian television, newspapers and magazines continually celebrate Mr. Putin's "magical powers." They feature him not only as a macho, bare-chested warrior riding horses or demonstrating his martial arts skills,[30] but they show him finding pre-positioned treasures on the seabed or flying a motorized hand glider to guide rare cranes to their habitat. All this operates under the arc of bombastic nationalism where the repressive meets the ridiculous. PMR also means trying perennially to keep Putinism aloft on toxic fantasies, and reaching into the toolbox of dictatorship.

Opposition cannot be tolerated. We can see this in part in the Kremlin's harsh, even panicked reaction to a potentially strong political opponent, Alexei Navalny. After the attempted bio-weapon assassination failed, the Putin regime jailed him on his return to Russia and banned his movement by designating him as an extremist.[31] It seems, the specter that truly haunts the Putin government, to paraphrase Marx, is democracy.

Second, the social contract showed some significant stress already in 2011 and 2012 with the parliamentary and presidential elections, respectively, which were widely viewed as fraudulent and generated mass demonstrations across Russia.[32] This shook the Kremlin badly and led to both increased domestic repression and to an ever-greater emphasis on external threats. By 2015 the Russian economy was showing great strains, contracting by 3.7% that year, with real disposable income declining by 10%, according

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30 Erik Vlaeminc, "Masculinity Politics in Putin's Russia," *New Eastern Europe*, October 12, 2016. https://neweasterneurope.eu/2016/10/12/masculinity-politics-in-putin-s-russia/.

31 The Times of Israel, "Russia Orders Jailed Activist Navalny's Anti-corruption Groups to Halt Activity," April 26, 2021, https://www.timesofisrael.com/russia-orders-jailed-activist-navalnys-anti-corruption-groups-to-halt-activity/.

32 Ellen Barry, "Rally Defying Putin's Party Draws Tens of Thousands," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/12/11/world/europe/thousands-protest-in-moscow-russia-in-defiance-of-putin.html.

to the World Economic Forum.[33] With GDP declining further by 0.2 % in 2016, according to Bloomberg,[34] the unidimensional Russian economy was simply not able to deliver on the social contract's promise of continuing significant economic improvement in the standard of living.

The trendlines are especially disturbing. As Anders Aslund has shown, between 2014 and 2019, Romania's GDP grew at an annual rate of 4.7%, Poland's at 4.1% and Hungary's at 3.9%, compared to the anemic Russian annual growth of only 0.7%.[35] In terms of purchasing power parity, whereas Russia was wealthier than Poland, Romania or Turkey in 2009, it is now poorer than all three.[36] Real disposable income in Russia is now over 10% less that in 2014.[37] Though the contraction of the Russian economy during the Covid pandemic may be slightly lower than in Western Europe,[38] it started from a very low base. Add the problem of rampant, corrosive corruption, with Russia in 2020 disturbingly ranked 129th on the corruption perception index, out of 179 states,[39] it is little wonder that foreign direct investment has fallen precipitously.[40] Thus, even though it is entirely conceivable that Mr. Putin himself genuinely pines for the glory of the Russian Empire and may possibly imagine some magical path to superpower restoration, he is also cunning enough to understand that manufacturing an external threat, and inducing a type of permanent mobilization of the population may be a central source of political

33 Rosamond Hutt, "6 Things to Know about Russia's Economy," World Economic Forum, December 12, 2016, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/12/things-to-know-about-russia-s-economy/.

34 Olga Tanas, "Russia Nears End of Recession as GDP Shrinks Less Than Forecast," *Bloomberg Markets*, February 1, 2017, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-02-01/russia-nears-end-of-recession-as-gdp-shrinks-less-than-forecast.

35 Anders Aslund, "Russia's Bear Economy," *Project Syndicate*, April 22, 2021, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/putin-economic-policy-and-sanctions-cripple-russian-economy-by-anders-aslund-2021-04.

36 Aslund, "Russia's Bear Economy."

37 Anna Andrianova, "Russian Economy Rebounding from Covid Slump After Lockdown," *Bloomberg*, April 1, 2021, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-01/russian-economy-continues-climb-from-covid-slump-after-lockdown.

38 Adrianova, "Russia's Economy Rebounding."

39 Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index," 2020, https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/table/rus.

40 Aslund, "Russia's Bear Economy."

legitimation – even though ultimately this may be subject to its own laws of diminishing returns.

Domestic mobilization against "foreign threats," especially NATO and the USA, to guide foreign policy, is indeed what Mr. Putin has chosen. In the process he has played on the worst instincts of the Russian people, those of paranoia, xenophobia, and a deep sense of victimhood. We can see this insistence on portraying Russia as a victim even in the words of the "moderate" former Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev who, back in 2016, portrayed Russia as a victim of Western ambition, arrogance, and aggressiveness.[41] He entirely disregarded the remarkable efforts made by the Obama administration to improve relations with Russia. In 2009, Hillary Clinton grandiosely pressed the "reset button," signaling the desire for a new era of cooperation with Russia.[42] Specifically, the USA reconfigured its concept and strategy for missile defense in Europe,[43] acknowledged Russia's leading role in the post-Soviet space, temporarily ended NATO expansion and supported Moscow's membership the World Trade Organization.[44] Further, a careful examination of the 2010 US National Security Strategy reveals that not only was Russia rarely mentioned, but when it was, it was usually noted in a positive light with an emphasis on cooperation and partnership. And the Obama administration pursued a policy of "leading from behind" and "strategic patience."[45] The USA took all these quite conciliatory steps despite Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008.

Third, Russia suffers from an identity crisis that is yet to be resolved since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Putin administration has sought

[41] David Rising, "Russia PM Accuses NATO of Restarting the Cold War," *Global News*, February 13, 2016, https://globalnews.ca/news/2516057/russia-pm-accuses-nato-of-restarting-the-cold-war/.

[42] Michele Kelemen, "Clinton Says She'll Hit 'Reset Button' With Russia," *NPR*, March 6, 2009, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101532912.

[43] Steven Pifer, "Obama, Medvedev and Missile Defense," *Brookings*, May 20, 2011, https://www.brookings.edu/ opinions/obama-medvedev-and-missile-defense/.

[44] Peter Baker, "Obama Aims to Build Economic Ties with Russia," *The New York Times*, June 22, 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/06/23/world/europe/23policy.html.

[45] Gopal Ratnam, "White House Unveils Call for 'Strategic Patience'," *Foreign Policy*, February 5, 2015, https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/05/white-house-to-unveil-call-for-strategic-patience-russia-ukraine-syria-iraq-china-asia/.

to present Russia as an alternate civilization to what it views as a dissolute and degenerate West. Vladislav Surkov, a key Russian ideologist, added a legalistic dimension to defining this new identity while emphasizing sovereignty as a capacity to act, combing economic independence, military power and cultural identity.[46] Yet this is an *ersatz* identity, particularly since for 300 years Russia identified itself as European. The bulk of the Russian population is European and most of Russia's trade and economic, cultural, and scientific exchanges are with Europe and the West. This is not to dismiss the importance of relations of China and Asia, but Eurasianism much more confuses than clarifies Russian identity.

Last, the succession crisis is too often ignored or ill understood. Russia was given an inkling into the problem when Mr. Putin decided to switch official posts with Mr. Medvedev in 2011. The issue in fact is much deeper than mere opaqueness, for there is no truly orderly mechanism for succession. And a succession crisis could have a profound impact on surrounding states and on relations with the West in general. Yes, Mr. Putin seems firmly entrenched in power. With recent constitutional changes, theoretically he could stay in the presidency seat until 2036,[47] but despite PMR and constitutional amendments, he is not immortal. And to we paraphrase (Herbert) Stein's "Law," "if something cannot go on forever, it will stop."[48] Mr. Putin's mortality means that there will be a succession at some point even though there is no credible and predictable procedure in place.

The global challenge

Still, the threats and problems that NATO confronts are both broader and deeper than Russia, and geographically far wider. These include, but are

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[46] *The Wall Street Journal*, "Surkov: In His Own Words," December 18, 2006, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB116646992809753610.

[47] Aurel Braun, "False Reality Is at the Heart of Putin's Brazen Constitutional Assault," *The Globe and Mail*, July 2, 2020, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-false-reality-is-at-the-heart-of-putins-brazen-constitutional-assault/.

[48] Paul Krugman, "Stein's Law, New Application," *The New York Times*, January 14, 2010, https://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/14/steins-law-new-application/.

not restricted to, information warfare, terrorism, and cyberwar, as well as a rising China, which, with its Belt and Road Initiative, shows not only unlimited global economic ambitions but increasingly aggressive global military aspirations. NATO consequently operates within that larger fluid and at times volatile global order and both within the Alliance, and within the global system, the regional and the global continue, for better or worse, to hinge in no small measure on the role of the USA. This is not meant to claim that it is an America-centric world or to be an allusion to structural realism, for I do not admire the rigidity of that latter approach, but institutions, structures, and process continue to reveal a pivotal role for the USA, from the very foundation of NATO. Further, NATO's decision to enlarge its scope, to use the aphorism "out of area or out of business," was to a significant extent a matter of American push, combined certainly with enlightened self-interest. The USA therefore remains, so to speak, the parochial "elephant in the room" in any discussion of the Alliance and its global role.

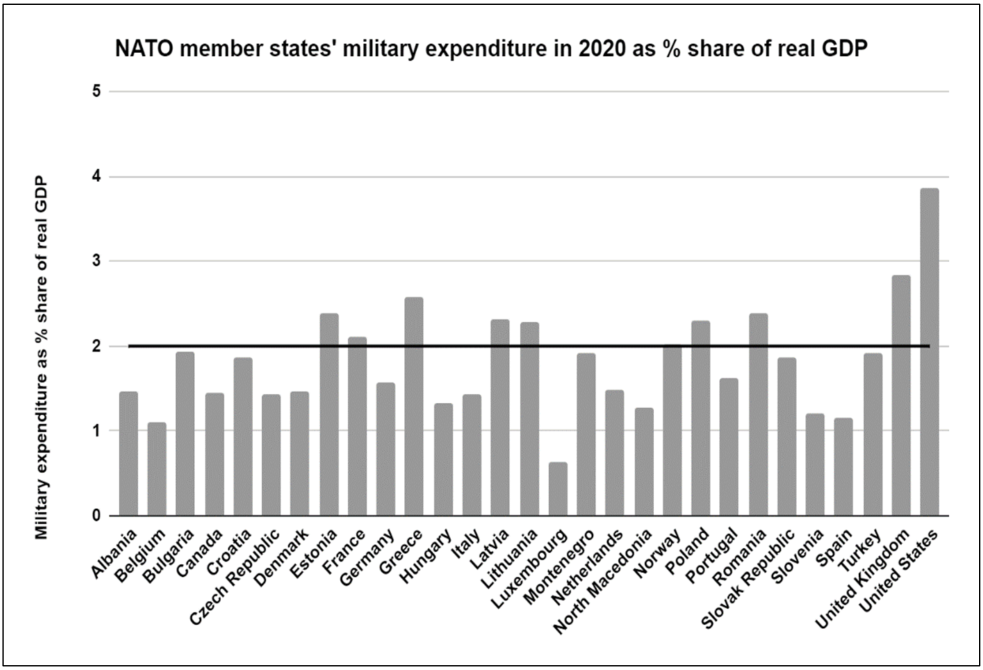


Fig. 5.

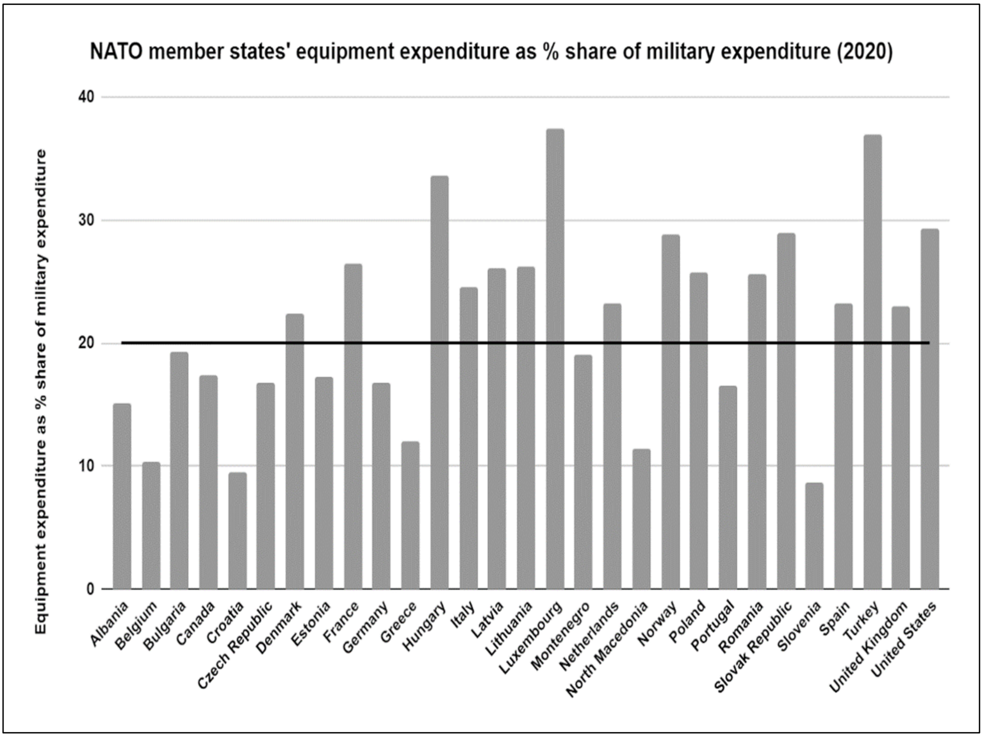


Fig. 6.

American preponderance

Just how paramount a role the USA plays in NATO is apparent in any measurement of defense expenditures within the Alliance, whether as a percentage share of GDP, Fig. 5, total dollar expenditures yearly from 2013 to 2020, Fig. 7, or spending on equipment in 2020, Fig. 6. Though other NATO states have begun to increase their defense expenditures recently, the US defense spending in 2020 constituted an overwhelming 71.9% of total Alliance outlays – Fig. 8, and an even greater 78.2% of the total for equipment purchases in 2020 – Fig. 9.

It is little wonder that the new NATO members look to Washington for hard security guarantees.

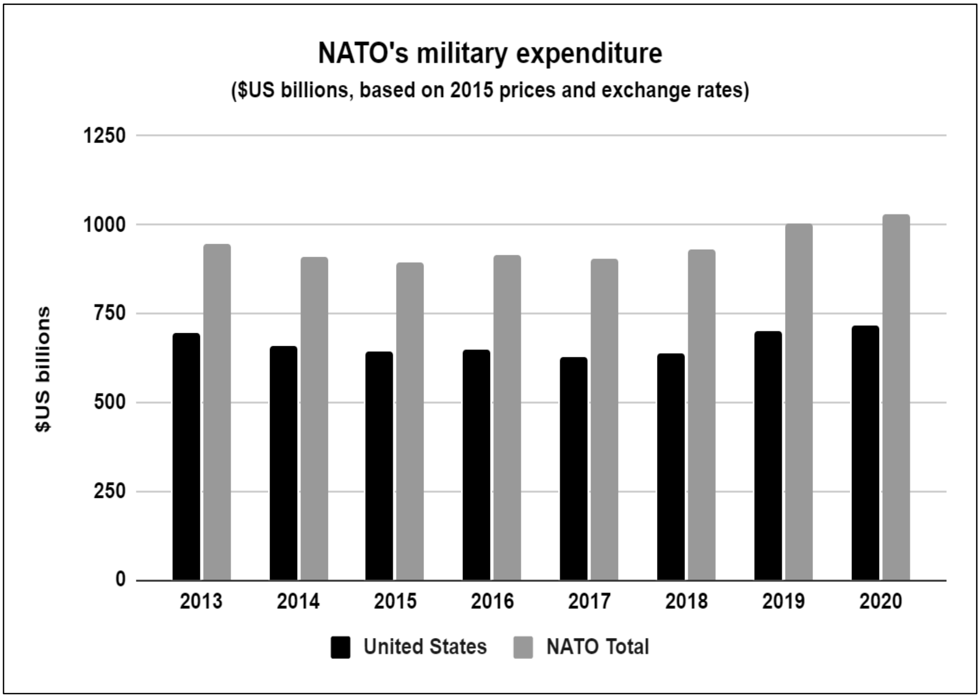

NATO's military expenditure
($US billions, based on 2015 prices and exchange rates)
1250
1000
750
500
250
0
$US billions
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
United States
NATO Total

Fig. 7.

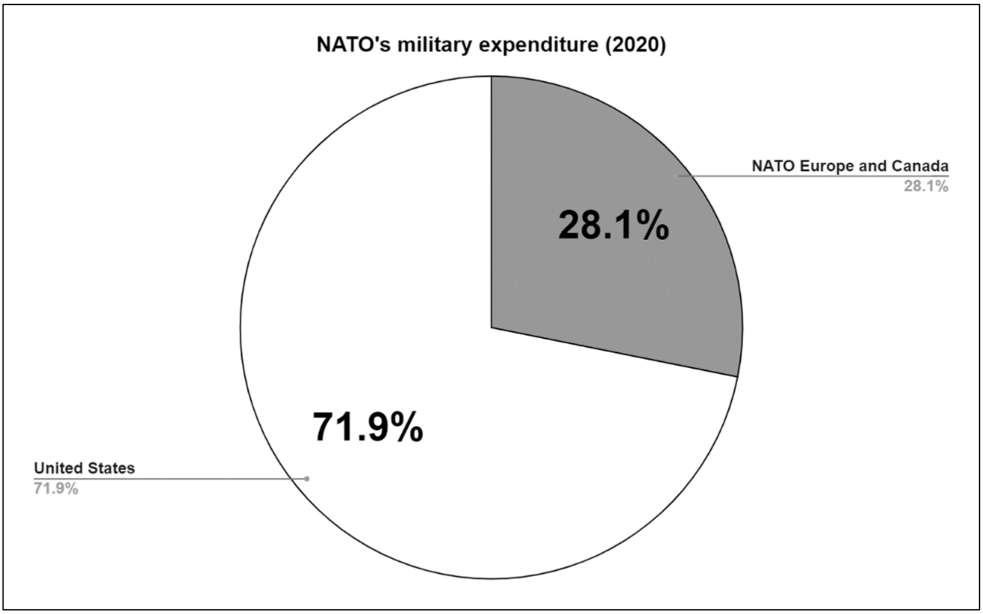

NATO's military expenditure (2020)
NATO Europe and Canada
28.1%
28.1%
71.9%
United States
71.9%

Fig. 8.

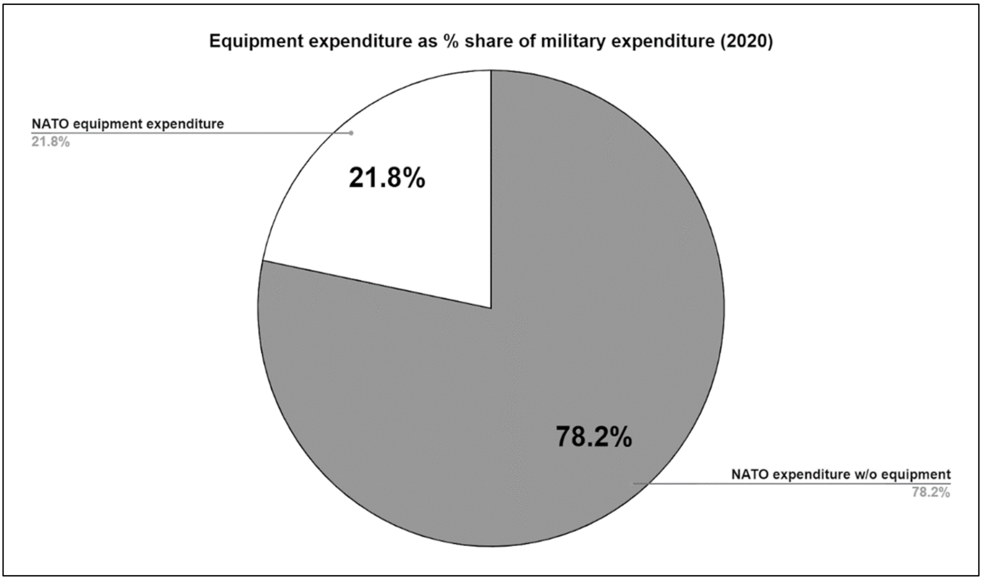


Fig. 9.

To be sure, in some ways, America's role has continued to change. In 1950, for instance, the United States produced roughly half of the world's GDP and that level could not be sustained. Personalities and policies have also had a profound impact on transatlantic relations. One may well imagine that NATO was likely traumatized by the bluster, bullying, and provocations of President Donald Trump. With President Biden, an experienced foreign policy hand, there seems to be a kind of *thermidor*. His soothing rhetoric and reassuring pronouncements, when it concerns the Alliance, have been welcomed. Policy-wise, however, matters may not be quite as simple or stark. Undoubtedly, President Trump used coercion as well as persuasion to force an increase in military spending among European allies, but also dramatically increased American military expenditures and provided weapons to Ukraine that the previous administration had denied. Under President Biden, the American military budget, minus inflation, is flat.[49] He

[49] Ashley Roque and Michael Fabey, "Pentagon Budget 2022: White House Reveals USD715 Billion Topline Request," *Janes*, April 9, 2021, https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/pentagon-budget-2022-white-house-reveals-usd715-billion-topline-request.

has pledged "unwavering support" for Ukraine in April 2021,[50] but we are going to have to see if this translates into meaningful support in the face of Russian pressure or aggression, and whether the Biden administration will respond to pleas by the President of Ukraine for the USA to find a faster way to get their country into NATO.[51] As the former Vice-President in the Obama administration, there is also a question as to whether President Biden will pursue a new subtle form of isolationism, perhaps disguised as "leading from behind," a kind of "Obama 2.0." The Biden administration may also shift emphasis from the Atlantic to the Pacific in light of the rise of Chinese power and increasing military assertiveness.

Power shifts and "friendly fire"

Of course, America's role is not defined exclusively by presidential personality. It is not even purely a matter of Washington's policies. It is a combination of all these that crucially also involve the very nature of the international order. The USA's input, as in the case of other powers, has varied according to the epoch and opportunities. John Ikenberry, among others, for instance, pointed out that as the United States emerged from World War II, it helped shape the international order even though, in his view, it was a bipolar system for decades.[52] At the end of the Cold War he justly noted that the United States was the world's sole superpower[53] with different opportunities.

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[50] Olga Shylenko and Anastasia Clark, "Biden Pledges 'Unwavering Support' for Ukraine amid Russian Military Buildup," *The Times of Israel*, April 2, 2021, https://www.timesofisrael.com/biden-pledges-unwavering-support-for-ukraine-amid-russian-military-buildup/.

[51] Pavel Polityuk and Vladimir Soldatkin, "Ukraine Calls for Path into NATO after Russia Masses Troops," *Reuters*, April 6, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia/ukraine-calls-for-path-into-nato-after-russia-masses-troops-idUSKBN2BT1LX.

[52] John G. Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5, no. 2 (2005): 133-52, https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lci112.

[53] Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order," 133.

Both the reality and the perception of the United States have changed. The position that the USA occupied in the international system just after the end of the Cold War could not be sustained because the confluence of factors that allowed it to hold a singularly influential position, even though its GDP represented a significantly smaller percentage of the world's output than in 1950, was ephemeral. Unquestionably, America exhibited elements of triumphalism, from Reagan to Bush 41 to Bush 43. Some analysts even asserted the inevitable victory and immutability of liberalism.[54] To be sure, America *appeared* globally unchallengeable and its role within NATO unquestionable. By 2021, however, at best, this seems to be a quaint memory.

True, the debate about the USA's role in the international system and in alliances has been ongoing both within NATO and the USA itself. For a long time within the West, the "American system" was as stable as it was long lasting. It was built on two "historic bargains," as Ikenberry pointed out.[55] First, the "realist bargain" was derived from the grand strategy of the Cold War where the United States provided European and Asian partners with access to American markets and with security protection in return for these countries being reliable partners.[56] Second, the "liberal bargain," which was an institutional one, bound the USA to its partners via institutionalized coalitions in return for a political-economic system that was agreed upon – of course with American leadership.[57] Naturally there was more complexity than this double bargain would suggest and all this operated in what was supposedly a bipolar international system that is no longer extant.

The post-Cold War confidence in American power and indeed, the perception of it, was of such magnitude that the concern was more over the United States abandoning the system, of America being a kind of new Rome that was unchallenged and unchallengeable. Some, scholars, like Vittorio Emanuele Parsi, for instance were concerned, as late as 2003, that the shift in power was so dramatically in favor of the USA that Washington would jettison what Parsi labelled as a *pace d'equilibrio*, (**peace of equilibrium**) in

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[54] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).
[55] Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order," 135.
[56] Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order," 140.
[57] Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order," 140.

favor of an American controlled *pace egemonica* (**hegemonic peace**).[58] Perhaps influenced by Bush 43's push for "contingent sovereignty" and American pre-emption, Parsi felt that power had shifted so dramatically in favor of the USA that counterbalancing it by the other powers was impossible.[59]

Today, the pendulum seems to have shifted far in the other direction, and not just because of the rise of China. Particularly during the Trump presidency, the USA's hard power became distrusted, its soft power disparaged, and America became the subject of a frenzy of international criticism that at times seemed to transcend ideological, military, or cultural concerns, and transmogrified into a cult of hatred that is exemplified by the regimes in Iran, Venezuela, and Russia. Rhetoric from these regimes suggests that the United States is well on its way to a Hobbesian fate – brutal, isolated, and in the cold.

Disturbingly, some in NATO themselves, in a misguided exercise in "friendly fire," may have contributed to this perception. In November 2019 in an interview with *The Economist* magazine, the ambitious President of France, Emmanuel Macron, grandiosely complained that NATO suffers from "brain death."[60] Macron, who then stood by his *bon mots*, when challenged, however, was not merely flippant, provocative or reckless, but potentially very disruptive and destructive. He suggested that the key Article 5 of the Washington Treaty that guides the Alliance, which committed all the members to a common defense, was not necessarily effective, that Europe stood on the "edge of a precipice," that *they could no longer rely on America* to defend NATO allies,[61] and that unless Europe started thinking about itself strategically as a geopolitical power, it would no longer be "in control of our destiny."[62]

Certainly, German Chancellor Angela Merkel quickly labelled Macron's outburst to be "drastic words," (but just as fast Russia welcomed

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58 Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order," 142.

59 Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order," 142.

60 *The Economist*, "Emmanuel Macron Warns Europe."

61 *The Economist*, "Emmanuel Macron Warns Europe."

62 *The Economist*, "Emmanuel Macron Warns Europe."

Macron's assessment as "truthful words)."[63] François Heisbourg, a distinguished French security studies scholar and former diplomat, also dismissed Macron's comments as "bizarre."[64] NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg hurriedly made a point of praising NATO *and the American role in Europe*, and noted that "any attempt to distance Europe from North America would not only weaken the trans-Atlantic alliance, it also risks dividing Europe itself."[65] It is also worth noting that in fact, NATO has tried to reinforce Alliance solidarity, as was shown in March 2021, with the organization's common funding that was designed to boost deterrence and defense.[66]

Yet, the words of President Macron were not accidental and his accusations suggest a deeper fissure. He has continually made overtures to Russia, has emphasized not only strengthening European defense but diminishing the role of the US, in a sense **a kind of soft separatism,** that has deep roots in some of the French intellectual thinking. It is not only that he appears to think that the USA may be an undependable transatlantic partner, but also one that is in irreversible decline. In some ways, this is also part of a virtual industry of American "declinism" that exits in various parts of the world, and that in certain French circles is especially virulent.

Jean-François Revel observed in his book *L'obsession Anti-Américaine* that this was a fixation particularly amongst some of the French left.[67] One of the more influential books on American declinism in France was written by Emmanuel Todd, *After the Empire*, a work of crude determinism that argued that the USA was losing its grip on the world stage in military, economic, and ideological terms.[68] In some ways more of a creed than a study, it did

63 BBC News, "Merkel: NATO 'A Cornerstone of Our Security,' Says German Chancellor," November 7, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-50340558.

64 Steven Erlanger, "Macron Says NATO Is Experiencing 'Brain Death' Because of Trump," *The New York Times*, November 7, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/07/world/europe/macron-nato-brain-death.html.

65 Erlamger, "Macron Says."

66 NATO, "Boosting NATO's Presence in the East and Southeast," April 26, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm.

67 Jean-François Revel, *L'Obsession Anti-Americaine* [The Anti-American Obsession], trans. Diarmid Cammell. (California: Encounter Books, 2004).

68 Emmanuel Todd, *After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

contain a certain grain of truth in the sense that there are always power adjustments in the international system.

American "declinism," of course, is not necessarily new or exclusively French. , wrote *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*[69] back in 1987. Yet if America is to be *right-sized* and the transatlantic alliance to be productively assessed, then it needs to be understood that **some relative decline is not the same as descent into what is essentially ineffectiveness.** In fact, there are those who argue that despite the rise of China, the United States will remain powerful for a long time and that it retains enormous advantages both in hard and soft power.[70] Robert Kagan has also made a powerful case for what he labelled the myth of American decline.[71] Michael Mandelbaum, for his part, argued persuasively and perhaps provocatively, that America plays a preponderant international role and should it no longer be capable or willing to do, the world will regret it.[72]

Though President Macron's suggestion of greater European security self-reliance is not necessarily deleterious, it is something else if it is predicated on American declinism, a Russian "counterbalance" or his possible ambition to succeed Angela Merkel as the "leader of Europe." The uncomfortable reality may be that Macron is not engaging in some reasoned Cartesian analysis but is rather driven by unmoored political ambition and a craving for Gaullist grandeur whereby he views American "decline' as an opportunity for France. Add to this Turkey's destructive decision to purchase from Russia the S-400 missile defense system which puts at risk NATO's broader defense systems and F-35 fighter

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[69] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage, 1989).

[70] Gregory Mitrovich, "Beware Declinism: America Remains Poised for Greatness," *The National Interest*, July 5, 2020, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/beware-declinism-america-remains-poised-greatness-163810.

[71] Robert Kagan, "Not Fade Away: Against the Myth of American Decline," *Brookings*, January 17, 2012, https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/not-fade-away-against-the-myth-of-american-decline/.

[72] Michael Mandelbaum, *The Case for Goliath: How America Acts as the World Government in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009).

operations,[73] and the potential for self-inflicted major damage within the Alliance should be readily apparent. Again, though increased military strength within the European Alliance members could be beneficial, attempts to replace or displace the USA are gravely misguided. *The American contribution to security and the viability of the Alliance is irreplaceable*. To put it bluntly, when it comes to *hard security guarantees*, **it is only the United States** that can for the foreseeable future provide that within the Alliance. In terms of global security, only a NATO with a solid transatlantic link is best equipped to adapt and contribute.

Conclusion

Any international institution needs to adapt because the international system will invariably continue to evolve. The approach I suggest is one that combines realism with pragmatism, where the normative co-exists with the empirical and recognizes that analysis has to be dynamic rather than static. We need to avoid rigid concepts and appreciate that the Alliance has a wealth of opportunities in front of it, if it can remain cohesive, and that its potential contributions to a stable international order are unequalled.

In a world where global security continues to be determined by hard as well as soft power, security remains a central endeavor of governments, with alliances as a primary way to add to or maintain power. As no other entity or institution even remotely matches NATO's "footprint" or attraction, it remains an indispensable pillar of international security. Its future, however, is far from guaranteed, not only because of the rise of China – which in contrast to a Russia that poses a proximate but basically regional threat – is a strategic and long-term danger, but also because of internal demoralization, petty rivalries, isolationism and short-term thinking. These external and internal challenges should not be underestimated, but the

[73] Al Jazeera, "Purchase of Russian S-400 a 'Done Deal', Turkey Tells US," March 24, 2021, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/24/turkey-tells-us-at-nato-russian-defence-purchase-is-done-deal; TASS, "Turkey Considers Purchasing 2nd Regiment of Russian-made S-400 Air Defense Systems," March 3, 2021, https://tass.com/world/1262247.

Alliance has an unmatched record of adaptation and perseverance and, if it has the collective willpower and wisdom, the odds are very much in its favor to endure as the necessary pillar of global security.

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NATO 2030: How Well Is the Alliance Adapting to the New Security Environment?

JAMIE SHEA

When the US President Joe Biden held his first summit with his fellow NATO heads of state and government in mid-June, his priority was to heal past transatlantic rifts and to mark a new beginning. Yet this did not mean that the new US administration sought to return to the old alliance pre-Trump or to mark a return to business as usual. As at the G7 in Cornwall just a few days earlier, Biden's quest was to recast transatlantic security relations within a new global narrative: that of the struggle between western liberal democracies and a newly assertive, self-confident set of authoritarian states, rivalling the classical west for geo-political power and influence. From an historical perspective, this takes NATO back to its roots when it was conceived in the late 1940s as a pillar of the liberal-democratic pushback against the expansionist authoritarian of that period, namely Soviet communism. The Biden narrative takes NATO out of its familiar anchorage in a European regional setting focused on border collective defense (to which it had returned after Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014) and re-positions the alliance within a new multilateral framework designed to deal not just with the armies of the authoritarians but with the nature of their political and economic systems more fundamentally. This is quite a shift in gears from the narrower direction NATO seemed to be heading in during the Trump years, bereft of US leadership, playing a reduced role on the global stage, and challenged in its own neighborhood by the EU quest for "Strategic Autonomy." Now that "America is back" in NATO, NATO is also back in America, again at the core of the US' global vision for the rest of the 21st century. It is a flattering but equally challenging, and at times uncomfortable position to be in.

Almost in anticipation of the change in the political wind in Washington, NATO has done a lot of work over the past year to analyze the new global security environment and determine how it needs to respond and adapt. The Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, appointed a team of experts, chaired by Thomas de Maizière of Germany and Wes Mitchell of the United States, to come up with ideas on how NATO could enhance its political role, and better coordinate not just military tasks but also political strategies among its members. This group reported its findings late last year and Stoltenberg has followed up with his own outreach project, called NATO 2030, to thinks tanks and younger audiences to gather their ideas and inputs on the alliance's future course. The NATO 2030 report of the young leaders group shows an interesting generational contrast with the more senior experts group in its focus on transnational security threats, such as climate change and pandemics, rather than on the more traditional great power competition from Russia and China, not to mention familiar military challenges such as nuclear deterrence. The senior group produced 138 recommendations which was obviously far too many for the NATO summiteers to digest. The advantage of Stoltenberg's NATO 2030 initiative is that it has allowed the alliance's leadership to filter all the multiple ideas and proposals collected in the outreach exercise and to boil them down to a more manageable set of eight recommendations. These are aligned with the key reform areas. The good news for Stoltenberg is that this broad package, although not all its details and individual recommendations, was approved by the NATO summit and can now form the basis for the drafting of the alliance's next Strategic Concept, due for submission to NATO's next summit in Spain in 2022.

The alliance's current Strategic Concept dates back to the Lisbon Summit in 2010. It is clearly out of date, having been conceived in the days when terrorism and energy cutoffs seemed to be the major threats, and the alliance's primary role seemed to be to carry out stabilization missions and cultivate partnerships with non-member states rather than to face up to aggressive great power rivals. Managing regional crises as they came along (and against inferior opponents), such as in the Balkans or later Libya, seemed to be more likely tasks than defending democracy against a global

authoritarian onslaught or preparing to fight major high-tech wars far from the alliance's home base. The 2010 concept does not even mention China and described Russia as a partner, albeit a prickly one. Yet the security environment has sharply deteriorated over the past decade making crises the rule rather than the exception and giving NATO a much broader and tougher spectrum of threats, both internal and external, to deal with. For some time already, a new Strategic Concept has been urgently needed to ensure that the alliance can defend its norms, strengthen its politico-military instruments and deter adversaries that are demonstrating ever more frequently an appetite for risk and confrontation, whether this is Russia harassing NATO warships in the Black Sea or China pushing outwards into the Taiwan Strait. A new Strategic Concept will not provide solutions to every challenge; but it can clarify thinking, establish priorities and refocus the allies on collective goals and efforts rather than the usual mainly national perspectives, hobby horses and talking points. So how are Stoltenberg's eight big ideas likely to go down with the 30 allied delegations at NATO HQ?

The first, on enhancing political consultations among allies, will probably receive a favorable reception. After all, the initial impetus for the NATO 2030 exercise was an interview that President Macron of France gave to *The Economist* in 2019. Macron declared that NATO was "brain dead," a statement that shocked many allies at a time when the alliance was already facing attacks on its credibility from the Trump administration. As they rushed to defend NATO from Macron's outburst, the allies gave the alliance a much-needed public relations boost. Macron subsequently clarified that he felt that NATO was working fine as a military planning organization but that it had failed to rein in Turkey over its interventions in Syria or Libya and that too many allies were acting unilaterally without prior notification in the North Atlantic Council. Yet those same allies were then coming to the Council and invoking Article 4 of the NATO treaty to request diplomatic backing for their unilateral and often surprise actions.

Given the turbulent state of international relations, it makes sense for the allies to use NATO more to share their analyses and try to forge common approaches on regional conflicts and global challenges. Indeed, some former alliance officials have suggested that NATO could be the forum where the

global democracies could discuss and coordinate grand strategy on China. Yet this expansion of NATO's political role has been tried in the past and has not worked. Some allies believe NATO should only discuss regional issues where it has a direct responsibility, such as troops on the ground. The Western Balkans come to mind here. Others worry that if NATO discusses a regional crisis, it will be interpreted by others as the alliance preparing to take action and could be destabilizing. Allies have also preferred to discuss sensitive issues bilaterally or in smaller groups like the Quad (US, UK, France and Germany) or the Five Eyes or a country or issue specific Contact Group. Many EU allies think that the EU (because it links security, diplomacy, trade and humanitarian resources) is a better instrument for coordinating with the US in a major crisis than NATO. So, whereas most allies will support the calls for a more political NATO, putting it into practice in concrete cases will no doubt prove more difficult. One area where the Secretary General may have more success is in broadening NATO consultations to more areas of government. Terrorism, attacks on critical infrastructure, disinformation campaigns, extreme weather events and pandemics are more likely to be handled by interior ministers, national security advisers, local mayors and police chiefs than by foreign or defense ministries. So, NATO could invite these homeland defense authorities to meet with or in the North Atlantic Council to help allies share expertise and enhance their preparedness. A good example was set in 2019 when national security advisers met at NATO to discuss hybrid warfare and a playbook of diplomatic and economic counter-measures. When it comes to budgets, meetings of finance ministers could prove useful. Finance ministers actually met frequently at NATO in its early years in the 1950s when the alliance was trying to find the resources to fund its initial Lisbon military force goals totaling 96 divisions.

The second area is resilience. The years since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 have seen NATO turn its attention to hybrid warfare and non-conventional threats as well as more classical conventional defense. The civil emergency planning structures that the alliance developed during the Cold War to handle things like sufficiency in foodstuffs, water, fuel, communications, air and surface transport and continuity of government have

been revived. NATO planners have established seven baseline requirements to cover these areas and have extended their scope to new forms of connectivity such as cyber space, satellite availability and data integrity. Allies have received detailed questionnaires, asking them to report on their levels of investment, redundancy and preparedness, an exercise that helps NATO planners spot gaps and vulnerabilities. The proposal now is to go beyond reporting and to the next step, which is to formulate concrete resilience goals that will be apportioned among allies in the same way as the defense planning capability targets. These resilience goals would then become highly visible national commitments which the allies would assess collectively every two years or so. They would come with obvious financial and investment implications.

However, some allies believe that this benchmarking by NATO would be too intrusive in a domain of critical infrastructure protection which can be highly sensitive. They feel that this should remain a national responsibility and not something managed or decided by NATO. So, whether the resilience goals will be essentially generic and aspirational, rather than specific and constraining, is still to be determined. Yet the alliance could agree on an annual vulnerability assessment, particularly relating to the critical transport, energy and telecommunications infrastructure on which it relies for its military deployments, and organize regional exercises to stress test the resilience of critical supply chains and nodes. Here the cooperation with the EU on military mobility (where the EU has launched its own project under PESCO) can help to generate EU funding and capability support for the connectivity upgrades that NATO needs most urgently.

Third is climate change. As a former UN Special Envoy on climate change, it is not surprising that Jens Stoltenberg has chosen to lead on this subject. Although NATO made a passing one-line reference to the security implications of global warming in its 2010 Strategic Concept, it has not systematically addressed this challenge until now. Back in March, NATO foreign ministers approved the alliance's first collective assessment on this topic. The Secretary General has now put some concrete ideas on the table. They have the merit of staying well within the alliance's field of competence, which helped to have them adopted at the recent NATO summit. For

instance, NATO will adopt common standards for military vehicles and equipment that use carbon reduction technologies. An associated aim is to develop a methodology to measure how much carbon NATO forces emit on an annual basis. Moreover, NATO will adapt and train its forces to be able to operate in more extreme weather environments, and do an impact assessment on how its military infrastructure could be disrupted by immediate and longer-term climate-related events. Military bases and essential infrastructure (such as ports) need to be made more resilient to sea level rise and higher temperatures. Finally, NATO, with its intelligence sharing and strategic forecasting capabilities, can serve as a hub for developing early warning and foresight among allies and partners regarding geo-political shifts engendered by climate change or more imminent political and social stresses leading to possible crises and humanitarian disasters. These are all sensible and, given the growing evidence of the impact of climate change, long overdue measures. As such, they have been largely welcomed by the NGO community, although some NGOs have criticized NATO for not signing up now to binding and verifiable CO_2 reduction targets. Predictably, some allies were hesitant to accept binding targets because of the constraints these could put on alliance exercises and conventional defense readiness. Yet by so publicly associating itself with the highly visible domain of climate change action, NATO will put itself under close scrutiny.

Another proposal is in the area of capacity building and training. As NATO has terminated its mission in Afghanistan and will do the same in Kosovo before too long, the era of major interventions seems to be behind us. The focus is now moving to training and mentoring local forces to handle domestic stabilization tasks largely by themselves, but with on the ground support from international advisory teams. The EU is already going in this direction with its EUTM missions in the Sahel and its new European Peace Facility. NATO also has set up a number of advisory missions in places such as Ukraine, Georgia and Jordan, and NATO defense ministers back in February decided to expand the alliance's training mission in Iraq across the country, with an extra 1200 NATO trainers under a new Danish command. Stoltenberg has proposed to put these activities on a more structured basis

by setting up a new training command HQ as part of the alliance's integrated military command system. Yet there are two questions here. The first is: does NATO have enough training clients to justify such a large new structure? The EU is already doing many of the training missions in areas of strategic interest to NATO, such as the Sahel, and persuading non-EU allies, such as the US and the UK, to also make a military contribution (if not in the framework of the EUTMs but under the UN flag or bilaterally). If the alliance preserves a major training role for the Afghan security forces (probably in Qatar, Kuwait or Jordan), a new training HQ may make sense, although there is always the question whether individual HQs attached to specific missions or regions are closer to the action and work better. Certainly, the allies are still committed to providing US $4 billion a year to the Afghan forces up to 2024, and a major out of country train and equip effort is vital if the Ghani government in Kabul is to sustain itself long enough to compel the Taliban to negotiate a power sharing agreement. On this urgent subject, the NATO summit provided little clarity. This being said, the future demand for NATO's training services, beyond the continuing operations in Iraq and Kosovo, is uncertain; and there is already a regional training center in Kuwait which is under-utilized. So the second key question is whether the allies will be prepared to establish a new, expensive HQ, with extra manpower requirements, or decide that training should be carried out by the current (and recently expanded) NATO command structure.

Next is burden sharing. When US Secretary of State, Tony Blinken, was at NATO in March, he reminded allies of their commitment to spend 2% of their GDP on defense. Yet he also helpfully suggested that the US would not look only at this target in assessing equitable alliance burden-sharing. Contributions to NATO operations and to meeting important capability targets for new equipment and greater readiness would also be taken into account. This will be music to the ears of many allies who have long been advocating these broader (and in their view fairer) criteria. The Secretary General has now proposed a significant increase in common NATO funding (around US $25 billion annually) which could be used to support (or reimburse) allies who deploy forces in NATO operations or help to pay for frequent and intensive exercises involving reinforcements over large

distances (High North, Black Sea). More common funding could incentivize allies to volunteer contributions, especially when operations come out of the blue and have not been anticipated in constrained annual national defense budgets. The UN practices this type of reimbursement for its peacekeeping forces. Yet France has resisted this idea, arguing that it would imply a considerable increase in NATO's collective budgets at the expense of national programs. France has also long argued that "costs should lie where they fall"; in other words, that it is the national responsibility of each ally to provide adequate resources for its armed forces and to cover national operations, both planned and unplanned. Given France's reservations, Stoltenberg can count it as a success that the NATO summit adopted his proposal for more NATO common funding in principle. The Secretary General had to backtrack on his idea to use the extra funds to pay for allies' missions and the additional resources, once agreed, will probably be less than what he had hoped for. Yet given all the new roles and responsibilities that the summit has placed on the alliance, increasing NATO budgets and staffing is unavoidable if these new activities are not to lose credibility quickly.

In sixth place comes Russia. There were over 60 references to Russia in the NATO summit communique; Moscow remains by far the alliance's primary political and military concern. Yet the forum where these concerns could be addressed, the NATO-Russia Council, has not met since 2019. Jens Stoltenberg has suggested these meetings should now be revived, arguing persuasively that it is even more important to talk and understand each other during times of tension than during more cooperative moments. Yet here the allies face a dilemma. They insist (rightly in my view) that Ukraine and Russia's destabilizing hybrid warfare activities (such as cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns and election interference) should be top of the agenda when the NATO-Russia Council meets; but this makes Moscow reluctant to accept NATO's invitations to meet as it knows it will be put on the defensive. Russia is more interested in resuming military contacts with NATO than in the political dialogue which it does not believe can be productive in current circumstances. NATO and Russia do indeed need to talk about military stability in the Euro-Atlantic area and transparency, risk

reduction and incident prevention. Russia has also made proposals regarding moving exercises away from borders and a moratorium on intermediate range missile deployments. It has offered to put its new 9M729 missile batteries in Kaliningrad into the mix as a potential sweetener. These may not be acceptable offers to allies given Russia's current regional preponderance in armor and missiles, but there is undoubtedly an important arms control agenda to be discussed with Russia. It includes the issue of what to do with lapsed treaties such as Conventional Forces in Europe, Open Skies or the OSCE- based Structured Dialogue and Vienna Documents providing for data exchanges and discussions on threat assessments. If the US succeeds in reviving some of these issues in its bilateral Strategy Stability Talks, which Biden and Putin agreed to resume at their recent summit in Geneva, there may be scope to use them to restart the NRC consultations with Russia at NATO HQ. Yet how to engage in this discussion without the alliance compromising on Ukraine and Crimea and giving Russia the impression of a return to business as usual? The agenda of arms control talks needs to be clear and concrete to overcome this stumbling block.

Technology inevitably also has to be part of NATO 2030. The alliance has been working on better understanding the impact of emerging and disruptive technologies on modern warfare, particularly in the information and data management space. NATO has identified 7 such technologies, which it needs to be able to exploit against potential adversaries while preventing those adversaries from using the same technologies to gain a war fighting edge over NATO. The focus here is on space and cyber, artificial intelligence driven processes, data integration, synthetic biology, bio-technologies, quantum computing, new materials and hypersonic velocity missiles. The challenge for NATO is to engage with the civilian innovation sector and the venture capital markets where the most ground breaking ideas are spotted and developed. This has been a weakness of NATO given its dependency on long-standing relationships with the major traditional defense contractors in its NATO Industry Advisory Group. One major step forward taken by the NATO summit was to establish an Innovation Accelerator modelled on the highly successful US advanced projects DARPA agency. The idea is to create a hub on both sides of the Atlantic where start-

ups can interact with the NATO scientific and technological community and potential private investors to conduct experimentation and form government-industry partnerships to take the most promising innovations to the market. NATO is currently seeking €75 million in start-up funding to launch the Accelerator and incentivize initial research projects to come forward. Yet this is modest capital compared to what allies such as France and the UK are spending on similar, national transformation initiatives (let alone the US). We also need to include in this list the European Defense Fund with €7 billion over 7 years and the addition defense research and space funding (€8 billion) available to the new DEFIS Directorate in the European Commission. So to help NATO move forward, and avoid a gaping interoperability problem between the technologically enabled allies and those lacking these force multipliers or unable to use them, the new NATO Accelerator will need to draw on the work of the EU and national R&D technology hubs. Moreover, it must obtain better results from the alliance's already existing structures, such as Allied Command Transformation, the Office of the Chief Scientist and the Science and Technology Organization in Paris. Given this already extensive civilian-military bureaucracy, NATO simply has to perform faster and more agilely in embracing emerging and disruptive technologies where the acceptance of risk, tolerance of failure and the ability to move fast without over-tight regulation and control are key to success.

Yet simply acquiring and integrating the new technologies into a multi-domain concept of operations is only one half of the story. As the technologies advance so the concepts regarding their operational use need to evolve as well. Here the NATO summit approved 3 important steps. The first is that NATO will produce a joint evaluation of the policy and ethical framework for the use of artificial intelligence. This is badly needed at a time when China and Russia are actively pursuing their research into the military applications of AI and fielding it in their next generation of sensors, drones, data exploitation and semi or even fully automated weapons. This is a competition where NATO cannot afford to be left behind. A second step was to link the alliance's Article 5 collective defense clause to attacks on NATO's space-based assets. This was a logical step after the alliance declared space

as its 5th operational domain at its London summit in December 2019. The task now is to conceptualize and define what an armed attack in space would look like (disruption or destruction of satellites with which temporary or lasting impact?), and to refine its toolbox of deterrence and response options. Thirdly, in cyberspace, NATO lowered the threshold for a collective response to a cyber-attack from a major aggression, equivalent to an armed attack, to a series of lower level but persistent cyber intrusions. This was in line with US policy after the US suffered a number of ransomware attacks against its pipeline system and food distribution, along with attacks on management control software in the spring. Yet these attacks are frequently the work of criminal gangs rather than nation states and do not justify a military response. So, lowering the cyber threshold will oblige the alliance to intensify its work on attribution, in cooperation with law enforcement and intelligence agencies, as well as to expand its toolbox of diplomatic, economic and technical response options below the Article 5 level.

Finally, in eighth place but certainly not last in terms of importance, comes NATO's future role in the Indo-Pacific. The NATO summit will be remembered in history as the moment when China moved to the top of NATO's agenda, based on a more consensual transatlantic evaluation of China as a systemic competitor and existential security challenge than had seemed possible just a few months before. China's more aggressive rhetoric and its clamp down on human rights in Hong Kong and the Xinjiang province undoubtedly contributed to this rapprochement. For the first time, NATO's next Strategic Concept will have to state how the alliance can face up to two great powers and strategic rivals at the same time. This is complicated by the fact that Russia and China are not only very different in the way in which they challenge the western democracies but also that they are increasingly working together, especially in the military domain. Russia is bringing China closer to Europe, especially with their joint maritime exercises in the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean. Therefore, NATO needs to develop separate strategies for how it deals with Russia and China, but also a joint approach for how it deals with them together. At the recent Valdai conference, Putin did not exclude that they could conclude a formal military alliance in the future. NATO has spent a lot of time trying to better analyze

and understand China, which is no bad thing as China has spent several decades analyzing the NATO countries and their strengths and vulnerabilities. This work has given China its new found confidence in the way it deals with democracies today and pushes back hard against criticism and perceptions of interference. Yet the Strategic Concept must now go beyond studying China and set out a strategy for handling systemic competition with Beijing over the long run. Here, out-competing China is clearly a better policy than trying to out-confront China. This means that NATO's future China strategy is likely to focus first and foremost on managing the challenge of China's rise in its own European theatre. The priority will be on improving the resilience and autonomy of supply chains, watching investment patterns and improving the science, technology and defense industry base of allies. NATO will also keep watch on joint Chinese-Russian military exercises or operations in the Artic or the Baltic and Mediterranean, as well as in Russia's western military district. The alliance will also track China's use of soft power through influence campaigns and the media; and any recourse to more overt hybrid warfare tactics.

This approach seems more realistic than a NATO military presence in the Indo-Pacific region, given its long term and heavy military responsibilities in the European neighborhood. The more the US leaves this task to the European allies the more they will need to devote their limited military capabilities fully to it. This implies that deployments in the Indo-Pacific will be largely the affair of individual allies rather than NATO as a whole. In this respect, the UK has decided to send its new aircraft carrier, the Queen Elisabeth, to the South China Sea, and France recently sent a submarine on a freedom of navigation mission to the same location. France, Germany and Belgium have also sent frigates on port visits to the Indo-Pacific and to join multinational exercises. If allies send more assets to the Indo-Pacific, NATO planners will need to figure out how to plug potential gaps in the alliance's collective defense and exercise posture in the European theatre. This leaves two key questions that the new NATO Strategic Concept will need to resolve.

First, the alliance will have to identify a format for talks with Beijing. The more it concentrates on the challenge from China, the more it needs to

open up a channel of dialogue with this country. Otherwise, misunderstandings and mutual threat perceptions are bound to grow. NATO 2030 recommends this step and the summit too endorsed the need for dialogue, although it stopped short of advocating the creation of a NATO-China Council, with associated working groups and sub-structures, along the lines of the NATO-Russia Council. The two co-chairs of the Secretary General's senior group of experts thought that such a Council would be premature until the allies have harmonized their assessments of China. Other interim channels will be required instead. For instance, a military dialogue and confidence building such as that between NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Chairman of the Military Committee with the Russian defense chief, Gerasimov, annual strategic talks between the NATO International Staff and senior Chinese foreign and defense ministry officials and a parliamentary track through the partnership outreach of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

The second question is what will be the future shape of the alliance's relationship with its Asia-Pacific partners, such as Australia, Japan and South Korea? These countries were invited to the G7 meeting in Cornwall but they were not part of the NATO summit, which put China on NATO's strategic radar. This may have been wise to avoid the impression of a new anti-China alliance being summoned into existence. Only one of the partners, Australia, is currently part of NATO's Enhanced Opportunity Partnership. How interested will these Indo-Pacific democracies be in stepping up their cooperation with the alliance if NATO is not taking on compensating military roles and responsibilities in the Indo-Pacific? Will they be content with a more intellectual form of partnership, which is limited to exchanges of assessments on Indo-Pacific security and emerging challenges such as terrorism, piracy, cyber or climate driven threats, or will NATO propose some more concrete activities such as an annual maritime exercise in the Indian Ocean to practice freedom of navigation or anti-piracy procedures? If NATO is not ready to deploy ships or air assets in the region, will it at least consider establishing military liaison and diplomatic offices in the region to improve allies' situational awareness and connectivity with Asia-Pacific partners? This could be of value at a time when countries like Australia have

announced military modernization programs and increases in their naval deployments and regional training and engagement activities.

In conclusion, NATO 2030 has been a useful exercise in mapping out for the allies the key issues and choices that they will confront in adapting the alliance to today's rapidly mutating and unfortunately deteriorating security environment. NATO's Secretary General deserves the credit for grabbing the bull by the horns and putting his ideas on the table. Having spent so much of his time and energy on managing crises, as much in relations among allies as between allies and their adversaries, he has now taken the lead in the debate on NATO's longer-term future. Stoltenberg was rewarded by seeing his key proposals, at least in their broad outlines, adopted at the recent NATO summit. Biden too will be pleased that he was successful in giving the alliance a more global orientation and branding, and putting China on the agenda as a strategic challenge rather than only an economic or trading rival. This will help to shore up support for the alliance in Washington. The attentive reader of the summit communique will see China even in those paragraphs where Beijing was not explicitly mentioned: in space, cyber, resilience, new technologies and innovation, and enhanced political consultations. Yet the success of the summit in emphasizing all the new directions for NATO came at the expense of a relative quiescence on many traditional and unfinished items of business. Strengthening NATO's collective defense forces in Europe, helping Ukraine and Georgia resist Russian pressures, stabilizing the Balkans, finding a way forward in Afghanistan, and sorting out a better synergy between NATO and EU defense research and capabilities efforts are arguably just as important for NATO's future as a viable security institution as addressing China or climate change. The old business does not go away, or become less important just because the new appears on the horizon. The authors of NATO's next Strategic Concept will have to provide the policy substance on Global NATO while ensuring that Europe NATO does not stagnate or go into reverse.

Transatlantic Relations under a New U.S. Presidency. Will We Have a Transatlantic Reset?

ROBERTA N. HAAR

The first months of 2021 were full of forward-thinking foreign policy analysis about the new Joe Biden administration. The main European foreign policy think tanks in Brussels all had prominent analysts discuss what sort of administration had taken residency in the White House. Both publics and policy makers wanted to know if the United States would rebuild its geopolitical partnerships and resume its global leadership role. There are signs that it will and enormous obstacles that suggest that it might not.

In this paper I will consider the current evidence that Biden will attempt a reset of former President Donald Trump's transactional foreign policy as well as contemplate the realities that will constrain him. Knowing the constraints, I will subsequently offer six concrete policy recommendations that acknowledge the fact that there is no other serious contender for leadership within the transatlantic relationship aside from the United States (with the support of the EU) on a variety of security and defense-related issues. Moreover, there is no serious alternative security and defense framework to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for the West in the near and medium term, which Europeans must acknowledge and even utilize as the basis for the renewal of their partnership and the advancement of their joint-leadership capacity.

The foreign policy President

The first point to consider is that Biden is exceptionally different from Trump in his foreign policy familiarity. Biden enters the Oval Office as the most experienced foreign policy president since George H. W. Bush in 1989. Both Bush and Biden were Vice-Presidents for two terms and both had

important foreign policy roles throughout their careers. Biden was a member and Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for many years, during which he met some 150 foreign leaders from 60 different countries.

Certainly, no U.S. President has attended and spoken at more Munich Security Conferences, the annual February get together of senior foreign policy decision-makers, which convened for its 57th online meeting earlier this year. Biden joined the February 19, 2021 event with a speech that implored U.S. partners to help defend democracy and collectively confront global challenges like the pandemic and the climate crisis.

Secondly, a read of Biden's March 2020 essay in *Foreign Affairs*, entitled "Why America Must Lead Again,"[1] is also comforting for America's allies who hope that Biden will make a confident reassertion of U.S. foreign policy that also translates into the U.S. again bearing a disproportionate share of global security. Biden additionally promised to reinvest in the American diplomatic corps in the first foreign policy address of his presidency, which he delivered to the embattled Foreign Service Officers in the Benjamin Franklin Hall at the State Department, named after the father of U.S. foreign policy.[2]

Moreover, Biden has appointed an experienced foreign policy team. For example, unlike Trump's Secretaries of State, Tony Blinken has direct familiarity with the State Department and is also already known in foreign capitals as a diplomat. Blinken is also committed to rebuilding alliances, in particular in order to negotiate a new deal with Iran, to confront China and to deal with the covid-19 pandemic. In March 2021, Blinken was in Brussels where he joined the NATO ministerial, met with the European Union leadership and held bilateral meetings with foreign ministers from across the continent. Blinken's message was clear: the United States is back and Europe is a key ally for it in the historical competition between democracies and autocracies. Speaking at the alliance headquarters, Blinken reaffirmed a U.S.

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1 Joseph R. Biden Jr., "Why American Must Lead Again: Recusing U.S. Foreign Policy after Trump," *Foreign Affairs* 99, no. 2 (March/April 2020): 64-76.

2 Joseph R. Biden Jr., "Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World," U.S. Department of State Headquarters, Washington, D.C., February 4, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/.

commitment to NATO in the traditional language, saying, "You have our unshakable vow: America is fully committed to NATO, including Article 5."[3] His statement was met with relief in European capitals, after four years of Trump, with French President Emmanuel Macron going as far as to declare NATO brain dead during Trump's tenure.[4]

Biden's National Security Adviser, Jake Sullivan, is also well known in foreign policy circles and appears to be on the same page as his boss. Writing in *The Atlantic* in January 2019, Sullivan sought to reclaim the idea of American exceptionalism on the world stage.[5] In an essay for *Foreign Affairs,* entitled "The World After Trump," Sullivan argues that the liberal international order is more resilient than doomsayers realize and that it was "built to last through significant shifts in global politics and economics and strong enough to survive a term of President Trump."[6]

Another piece of evidence that Biden will attempt a reset is his team's response to the EU's Joint Communication *A New EU-U.S. Agenda for Global Change* – because the response indicated that it had "substantial alignment with our thinking."[7] The Joint Communication is a to-do list for Americans and Europeans to get busy working on together.

Add to this that Biden has pledged a "summit of democracies" to face off against autocracies, a notion that underpins Biden's strategy and which was certainly in full display over the first months of the Biden presidency. The centerpiece of this strategy is the competition over what state system will lead the future and deliver a good society for citizens. Autocracies are inspired, if not led by, the example of China as well as Russia. The Biden

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[3] Antony J. Blinken, "Reaffirming and Reimagining America's Alliances," NATO Headquarters Brussels, Belgium, March 24, 2021, https://www.state.gov/reaffirming-and-reimagining-americas-alliances/.

[4] *The Economist,* "Emmanuel Macron Warns Europe: NATO Is Becoming Brain-dead," November 7, 2019, https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead.

[5] Jake Sullivan, "What Donald Trump and Dick Cheney Got Wrong About America," *The Atlantic*, January-February 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/01/yes-america-can-still-lead-the-world/576427/.

[6] Jake Sullivan, "The World after Trump: How the System Can Endure," *Foreign Affairs* 97, no. 2 (March/April 2018): 10-19.

[7] *The Economist*, "Repairing the Transatlantic Rift Will Be Tricky," January 7, 2021, https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/01/07/repairing-the-transatlantic-rift-will-be-tricky.

administration aims to rebuild its alliances with democracies in Asia through formats like the Quad (Australia, Japan, India, and the United States) and in Europe through NATO. Although this strategy does not see an unequivocal power struggle with China, it does envision a quasi-ideological contest between the systems of democratic government and autocratic rule.

Biden's hands are tied

Despite an obvious desire to reset Trump's transactional foreign policy, Biden must contend with a variety of constraints, such as domestic pressure for a harder stance on trade and a pullback from costly overseas commitments. The American public has soured on big trade deals like the TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership), meaning that no one in Washington, D.C. seriously talks about reviving the trade pact.

The Biden administration was also quick to criticize the December 30, 2020 deal that the EU brokered at the end of the German presidency with China. While some in the EU were boasting that the deal exemplified strategic autonomy, Biden said that he would prefer a united front of democracies in order to provide substantial leverage over China. In fact, Biden saw the investment deal with China as distinctly unhelpful. Since China has boycotted retailers like Sweden's H&M and slapped sanctions on 10 parliamentarians, including MEPs and 4 organizations (including the Political and Security Committee of the Council of the EU & the Subcommittee on Human Rights of the European Parliament) for making statements about forced labor in the Xinjiang province, Europeans might now see that Biden had a point.

Similarly, the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline that will bring fuel in from Russia is a source of transatlantic friction, which drew the threat of U.S. sanctions from the Trump administration and actual sanctions by the Biden administration on Russian companies that are involved in completing the pipeline. These punishments did cause Germany to begin looking for regulatory mechanisms that would limit Russia's ability to manipulate the European energy market, leading Biden to waive penalties on Germany for its role in the development of infrastructure.

However, the decision to not punish Germany for the pipeline is also domestically constrained. American politicians from both the Republican and Democratic parties view the pipeline as increasing Russia's leverage and influence in the region and thus strongly criticized Biden for waiving punishment on Germany. For example, Bob Menendez, the Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a Democrat from New Jersey, opposed the waiver for Germany while Jeanne Shaheen, a senior committee member of the same committee and also a Democrat from New Hampshire, said the pipeline "allows Russia to further spread its malign influence."[8] The different views on Nord Stream 2 means that it "may be today's biggest bone of contention among Western allies."[9]

Beyond specific geopolitical differences related to pipelines or 5G networks or even fast-fashion brands, it is clear that some general aspects of *Trumpism* are here to stay. Biden's win in November 2020 does mean some internationalism will return but he must be aware of the fact that the U.S. began retreating from its global leadership role when he was Vice President. Although at the Munich Security conference in February 2019, Biden articulated the idea that his presidency would return to internationalism, the truth is that the U.S. had already grown weary and inward looking as it tired of fighting endless wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Add to this the fact that the Democratic Party itself is shifting towards a more Trumpian view of the world. The other two Democratic candidates who voiced views on foreign policy, Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, both see Trump not as a historical *aberration*, but as the outcome of a long historical decline in the U.S.'s role on the world stage. Moreover, the Democratic Party's new strategic thinkers also argue that Trump is right. These new voices advocate restraint. In fact, the label *Restrainers* is becoming more mainstream.

It is likely that had Trump won a second term, Europeans could have expected a further diminishing of U.S. leadership or even withdrawal from

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[8] Matthew Lee, Ellen Knickmeyer and Frank Jordans, "US Spares Ally Germany in Sanctions for Nord Stream Pipeline," *AP News*, May 20, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/russia-europe-germany-business-government-and-politics-6e538d7960c4dfbc334228f2f1db03bf.

[9] Elisabeth Braw, "Why Is Ted Cruz Threatening Angela Merkel?" *Foreign Policy*, June 30, 2021, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/06/30/nordstream-ted-cruz-threatening-angela-merkel/.

NATO. However, Trump's loss does not mean that the relationship will go back to what it was before Trump. Biden's focus on a foreign policy for the middle class is certainly Trump-inspired. Nor has Biden pulled back on the trade war with China and when asked in Brussels in June 2021 about U.S.-imposed tariffs on European steel and aluminum, penalties that triggered reciprocal measures from the EU Commission, Biden dodged the answer. Why? Because any attempt at a reset of Trump's transactional foreign policy must nevertheless face domestic pressure for a harder stance on trade, a pullback from costly overseas commitments and ending the forever wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

What are European partners to do?

Because future collective security and defense will remain under NATO's remit and U.S. leadership European states must find meaningful ways to renew their partnership with the United States and to develop a joint-leadership capacity. There are a number of approaches that Europeans might utilize, six of which will be discussed in this paper.

First, European states should build on U.S. Congressional and public opinion that demonstrates full support for NATO.[10] For example, in October 2019, after Trump abandoned one of America's closest allies in the fight against terror in the Middle East (the Syrian Kurdish militia), Congress condemned him. As many as 159 Republicans sided with the opposition, in part because they knew Trump's imprudent behavior put additional strains on NATO. By mid-December 2019, the Senate Foreign Relations committee took a further step in unanimously passing a bill to stop Trump from withdrawing from NATO. This legislation is important for European leaders but more significant is the sentiment behind it – members of the U.S. Congress want to ensure that America's strategic partnership with European nation-states endures.

[10] Dina Smeltz, Ivo Daalder, Karl Friedhoff, Craig Kafura, and Brendan Helm, "Rejecting Retreat. Americans Support US Engagement in Global Affairs," The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2019, https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/report_ccs19_rejecting-retreat_20190909.pdf.

A **second** tactic for Europeans is to build upon a common view of the world, for instance, by capitalizing on EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's goal of creating a "Geopolitical Commission." This might mean an EU that recognizes the strategic reordering brought about by the U.S.-Sino rivalry and Europe's potential to be a "force multiplier," especially in contesting Chinese economic practices like intellectual property theft.[11] Other related mutual viewpoints include security issues in the South China Sea, digital and physical infrastructure (5G) as related to Chinese companies like Huawei, trade issues related to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China-related political issues such as human rights abuses of the Uighurs in Xinjiang province and Xi Jinping's deepening authoritarianism. In relation to many of these matters, the U.S. was content when the EU announced a shift in its China position in March 2019 when a Joint Communication labeled China a "systemic rival."[12] However, when it comes to forging bonds over a common outlook on Asia, Europe must overcome the suspicions that its commercial interests trump its strategic ones. For its part, the U.S. must reconsider its unilaterally deployed tariffs on steel and aluminum, alongside the threat of further measures on automobiles, which in turn cause the EU to employ a hedging strategy with China.

Since Biden has been in office, things with China have moved in ways that the EU may not have expected, especially considering China's boycott campaign of western companies, European parliamentarians and European researchers. Added to this is the fact that Blinken's first trip to Europe clearly had a goal to build a transatlantic consensus on China. As EU members at the June 2021 summit pledged to join the U.S. in urging China to respect human rights, specifically mentioning the Xinjiang province, it would seem that the EU is moving in that direction – to follow the U.S.'s lead in a global response to China's continued challenges.

Russia presents another opportunity for Europe to be a force multiplier. Today, Russia is still interfering in Ukraine, still supporting

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[11] Andrew Small, "Transatlantic Cooperation on Asia and the Trump Administration," Policy Paper German Marshall Fund, October 30, 2019, https://www.gmfus.org/news/transatlantic-cooperation-asia-and-trump-administration.

[12] European Commission, "EU-China–A Strategic Outlook," March 12, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf.

Bashar al-Assad in Syria and warlord Khalifa Haftar in Libya and still conducting murderous attacks using Novichok on perceived threats at home and abroad. Russian spies are also the likely perpetrators of the massive cyber-breach that compromised the U.S. government computer networks, including the Defense Department, the State Department, the Los Alamos National Laboratory and the National Security Agency.

And while the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is an exception that Germany is willing to resist the United States to maintain, it is not true that the economic ties between Moscow and Europe surpass the transatlantic ones. In fact, when it comes to Russia, Europe and America seem more united today than they have been in years, even Germany at the G-7 summit calling on Russia to stop its "destabilizing behavior and malign activities."[13] This language shows that at least the G-7 countries are keen on reestablishing a multilateral effort against Russian meddling to present Putin a united front after the Trump era.

Forging ahead on geopolitical challenges means also constructing a new mindset – the **third** step for Europeans is the need to *think* more geopolitically about their potential influence on the world stage. Macron made this argument, pointing to the lack of European and alliance coordination on policy towards the Middle East and Syria. If European states were inclined to be self-confident, they might persuade the U.S. to construct a more coordinated decision-making process on policy in the Middle East while at the same time acknowledging the sensitivities of fellow NATO member Turkey. Coaxing Turkey might be a separate exercise, since ahead of a NATO alliance summit in London in December 2019, Turkey's leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, announced that he would block NATO plans for the defense of Poland and the Baltic states until the alliance recognized the Syrian Kurdish militia as a terrorist organization.[14]

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[13] U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations, "Chairman Meeks Issues Statement After Conclusion of G7 Summit," Press release, June 13, 2021, https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/2021/6/chairman-meeks-issues-statement-after-conclusion-of-g7-summit.

[14] Reuters, "Turkey to Oppose NATO Plan If It Fails to Recognize Terrorism Threats: Erdogan," December 3, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-summit-syria-erdogan-idUSKBN1Y70KT.

A **fourth** approach to forging joint leadership is to build on the fact that both parties need each other when it comes to protection against technological innovation and in particular cyber and space warfare, a fact that was recently reiterated by German newspaper *Bild*, which cited intelligence sources that the "Fancy Bear" hacker group linked to the Russian state conducted a cyberattack on critical German infrastructure and its banking system in June 2021.

Combating Chinese espionage, which has become a serious cyber security threat with more hackers and related intelligence personnel than any other country in the world, is also a common goal. After China and India tested anti-satellite missiles, it further makes sense to develop space defensive and offensive measures. Europe could augment the United States' higher levels of spending on military space capabilities. Since satellites are vulnerable (either through hacking or through missile strikes), but also essential to modern warfare, protecting them could be a shared priority. The alliance took a step in the right direction in June 2019 when it adopted its first space policy, building on the creation of new space units in France, Great Britain and the U.S.

The **fifth** course of action that European nation states might employ is building on the fact that more NATO member states are hitting the target of spending 2% of their GDP on defense. As many as nine members met the target in 2019. Similarly, they could strongly support Ursula von der Leyen's goal of taking steps toward "a genuine European Defense Union." In light of this goal, von der Leyen has given the French commissioner for the single market, Thierry Breton, the additional role of director-general for the defense and space industry. Breton should be encouraged to utilize the $14.4 billion of the European Defense Fund, over which he will preside, in a way that complements U.S. defense research while at the same time bringing together Europe's current fragmented industry more profitably.

A **sixth** way in which to renew their partnership and develop a joint-leadership capacity is to reinvigorate trust between the United States and Europe by reforming the post-war institutions that underpin their security and defense. Michael Smith, for example, argues in a chapter on EU-U.S. diplomatic relations that "The evidence that trust has been eroded, that

communication has been in some cases a dialogue of the deaf and that coordination has been replaced by confrontation is compelling."[15] To start with, European nations must also find a way to overcome their publics' distrust of meaningful European security and defense cooperation. European leaders must reach out to their publics, for instance, by engaging in a dialogue campaign with youth and civil-society organizations.

In terms of developing trust, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte is right when he argues that Trump's rhetoric is an opportunity. "We have to make use of Trump's criticism of these organizations to start to improve them. It is a much more constructive [approach]", he advised.[16] Whatever Trump's transactionalism might portend, it is still a fact that the United States and European nation states share common values and a common purpose, both of which remain a bedrock for future collaboration. However, without the glue of trust the alliance will not last another decade.

2021: What changes and what stays the same

The electoral environment of November 2020 was partly different and partly the same as in November 2016. A little over four years ago, the American electorate embraced candidates who openly waged war on their own parties. In 2020, America was again, or perhaps still, expressing political cynicism and anti-establishment fervor on a tremendous scale. However, today's anti-establishment passion is partly the result of a renewed sense of urgency in the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of George Floyd's death and the economic, cultural and social effects of dealing with the covid-19 pandemic.

In 2016, agitations meant America embraced Trump and Senator Bernie Sanders but not Hillary Clinton, the traditional candidate picked by

[15] Michael Smith, "European Union Diplomacy and the Trump Administration: Multilateral Diplomacy in a Transactional World?," in *The Making of European Security Policy: Between Institutional Dynamics and Global Challenges*, eds. Roberta N. Haar, Thomas Christiansen, Sabina Lange and Sophie Vanhoonacker (London: Routledge, 2021), 195.

[16] Mark Rutte, "Stronger Together than Apart," Atlantic Council, Washington, D.C., July 18, 2019, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/commentary/transcript/dutch-prime-minister-mark-rutte-stronger-together-than-apart/.

Democratic Party professionals. Since Joe Biden is as a traditional as they come, he may have difficulties in connecting with the anti-establishment mood that pervades America and incited an attack on the Capitol on the 6th of January 2021. Moreover, Trump himself may remain in the political spotlight and continue to affect U.S. politics in a way that is perilous for it and the future of the Republican Party. More than 74 million Americans voted for Trump, an unprecedented number, more than in 2016 (when he received less than 63 million votes – meaning some 10 million more voted for Trump in 2020). Republicans will want to find a balance between keeping these Trump voters motivated to support the party in the future but, at the same time, distance themselves from Trump's incendiary rhetoric, race baiting and now seditious acts.

This leads to the big question now in European minds: is Trump an exception, and will someone like him, or even Trump return in 2024? In fact, on the February 28, Trump teased a possible run for presidency in a speech given to the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) that also showed his continued command of the Republican Party. In what was his first public appearance since leaving office, he attacked fellow Republicans who hold him responsible for the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. An exodus of tens of thousands of Republicans leaving the party since January has been helping Trump strengthen his hold on the Grand Old Party (GOP). As those remaining are likely to be the most loyal to the former president, it could mean that candidates supported by Trump are more likely to win nominations in future primary-level elections.

What should Europeans do in such an environment? Should they hedge and seek alliances with other emerging powers, like China or even Russia, or should they help Biden fulfill his promise to American voters, that the U.S. is strongest on the world stage when it works with its allies? Certainly, Europeans are watching and thinking about Trump's "Revenge Tour" and wondering what it portends for the midterm 2022 and general 2024 elections. Perhaps NATO deputy Secretary-General Alexander Vershbow voiced their concerns best when he said that, for Europe, America would now always be the country that elected Donald Trump.

At the same time, we should keep in mind that Europeans have often worried about American leadership and commitments in the past, for example, in the 1970s when then U.S. President Richard Nixon and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger embarked on a policy of *détente*, which attempted to bring about a global balance of power between the superpowers. Europeans initially felt that *détente* marginalized them and called into question the existence of the NATO alliance. However, in time, they came to appreciate the lessening of tensions.

At other times, NATO's European member states have not been willing to follow America's lead, as during the 2003 Iraq War, when the perceived illegitimacy of the invasion led some European NATO members to question their exclusive reliance on an *American-led* alliance.[17] Echoes of this sentiment were on display at the 2019 Munich Security Conference, when Vice President Mike Pence's claim that Europe was "following Trump's lead" was met with an awkward silence.[18]

While this past friction is real, the inclination of the United States over the past two decades to shun leadership feels more substantial and more pervasive. Europeans certainly hope that Biden can reset the transatlantic Relationship. However, they should not wait for Biden to fulfill promises that "America is Back." Instead, Europe's leaders themselves should start working toward building a coherent strategic partnership of the North Atlantic Alliance – a durable partnership with the United States that might last another 70 years.

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[17] Sven Biscop, "NATO, ESDP and the Riga Summit: No Transformation without Re-Equilibration," Egmont Papers No. 11, Brussels: Royal Institute for International Relations IRRI-KIIB/Academic Press, 2006, 3, http://aei.pitt.edu/8978/1/ep11%2Dv1.pdf.

[18] Mark Champion, "U.S. Insists Europe Is Following Trump's Lead. Cue Awkward Silence," *Bloomberg*, February 17, 2019, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-17/awkward-silence-as-u-s-insists-europe-is-following-trump-s-lead.

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Post-Trump Implications in the US and European Security Debates. Good News and Bad News

VALENTIN NAUMESCU

Introduction

After the election of the 46th US President, new hopes emerged in the transatlantic relations. "The West is back!" many Europeans and Americans believe, sometimes replacing factual argumentation with wishful thinking. On both sides of the Atlantic, political and diplomatic milieus began to speak of a new era of multilateralism and liberal values.

A "festival" of optimism and positive statements erupted in a rediscovered Western world, after four years of mutual disappointment and bitterness. "Spring is in the air!" Gone are the days of discord and mistrust, when leaders were speaking about "European debts to NATO,"[1] "American trade deficit because of European unfriendly economic behavior,"[2] "the brain death of NATO,"[3] the possibility of a US withdrawal from NATO,[4] "a true European Army to protect us against China, Russia and even the United States,"[5] the intention of US troops withdrawal from

1 Peter Baker, "Trump Says NATO Allies Don't Pay Their Share. Is That True?", *The New York Times*, May 26, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/26/world/europe/nato-trump-spending.html.

2 Keith Johnson, "Europe Is the New Front in Trump's Trade War," *Foreign Policy*, January 23, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/23/europe-new-front-trump-trade-war-davos-wef/.

3 BBC, "NATO Alliance Experiencing Brain Death, Says Macron," November 7, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50335257.

4 Andrew McDonald, "John Bolton: Trump Could Pull US out of NATO," *Politico*, October 1, 2020, https://www.politico.eu/article/john-bolton-trump-could-pull-us-out-of-nato/.

5 Jason Lemon, "Emmanuel Macron Calls for 'True, European Army' to Protect Against U.S., China and Russia," *Newsweek*, June 11, 2018, https://www.newsweek.com/macron-wants-european-army-protect-against-us-1203115.

Germany,[6] frozen global agreements, unilateralism, protectionism, *America First*, mutual mistrust, an unclear European Strategic Autonomy and so on.

The good news is that a lot of progress is possible today in transatlantic relations and the potential for Western reinvigoration is significant. The bad news is that the expectations could be too high. The US and the EU remain two different entities and distinct global actors, with different societies, different economies, different cultural values and sometimes divergent interests. The alliance between them is natural, reasonable, based on common historic legacies and full of opportunities. Nevertheless, both parties will try to put their own interests on the first positions of the agenda. Without an in-depth and honest negotiation, no credible long-term agreement will be possible, even in the post-Trump era. One should take into consideration whether the US and the EU really intend to develop a realistic and effective approach, beyond all optimistic speeches of the first months of this year.

This contribution explores the main topics of the European-American rapprochement with a focus on security. In a deeply changing world, security remains the "flagship" of international politics. The new Biden administration largely reopened doors to a comeback of the transatlantic alliance, the Europeans agreed in principle, but the complexity of the current global context makes the distance from statements to achievements longer than expected.

A new Transatlantic agenda and the central role of security

The US-EU relations have indeed encountered an excellent refresh opportunity on several dimensions such as: global security, democracy and international political cooperation, trade and investment, climate and environment, digital policies and other fields of common action. The most important organization of the Western world, the North-Atlantic Alliance,

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[6] BBC, "US to Withdraw 12,000 Troops from Germany in 'Strategic' Move," July 29, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53589245.

needs a new strategic concept[7] and a new *raison d'etre*. The citizens of the United States and of the European Union member states need to be told and explained why it is necessary for the West to stay united in a political, military and strategic alliance. The western way of life and global pre-eminence should be defended against the challenging rising of China and the threatening defiance of Russia, two authoritarian and abusive regimes.

At the Munich International Security Conference on February 19, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg fueled the wave of optimism with a warm call to common action: "'we now have an historic opportunity to build a stronger Alliance, to regain trust and reinforce our unity – Europe and North America working together in NATO in strategic solidarity'. In view of global challenges such as the rise of China, cyberattacks, disruptive technologies, climate change, Russia's destabilizing behavior and the threat of terrorism, Mr. Stoltenberg underlined that 'no country – and no continent – can go it alone. On the contrary, we must do more together.' The NATO Secretary General set out the ambitious NATO 2030 agenda for the future of the Alliance. He stressed that working together in NATO, Europe and North America 'must reinforce our unity, broaden our approach to security, and defend the international rules-based order'."[8]

Preparing the new National Security Strategy, the White House released on March 3, 2021, an important document named "Interim National Strategic Security Guidance." This is a useful framework for understanding the intentions of the new government in Washington. Some ideas are really relevant for our topic and need to be noticed: "This work is urgent, because the alliances, institutions, agreements, and norms underwriting the international order the United States helped to establish are being tested. (…) We must also contend with the reality that the distribution of power across the world is changing, creating new threats. China, in particular, has rapidly

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[7] Klaus Wittmann, "What to Expect from the NATO Summit: A New Strategic Concept?," European Leadership Network, June 14, 2021, https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/what-to-expect-from-the-nato-summit-a-new-strategic-concept/.

[8] NATO, "NATO Secretary General Sets out Ambitious Transatlantic Agenda at Munich Security Conference," February 19, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_181694.htm?selected Locale=en.

become more assertive. It is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system. Russia remains determined to enhance its global influence and play a disruptive role on the world stage. Both Beijing and Moscow have invested heavily in efforts meant to check U.S. strengths and prevent us from defending our interests and allies around the world. (…) We will reaffirm, invest in, and modernize the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)."[9]

Still cleavages?

Unfortunately, the optimistic principles and encouraging slogans stop here. Today, a return to the pre-Trump context seems more and more difficult, if not impossible. The bubble of excessive optimism of the first post-electoral months is going to bust. In his first post-Trump speeches, French president Emmanuel Macron has discreetly suggested that he is not ready to fully embark on the US strategy (for instance, in the "extreme competition" against the ascension of China or in deepening the isolation and sanctions against Russia) and that Europeans are preparing "a distinct agenda."[10]

Strategists and decision-makers have to look towards the present world with more realism and in complex nuances. Things are not as easy as they initially seemed after the American presidential elections. Both the US and the EU have changed during the past four years. Beyond what is said to be common liberal values, they nowadays have different interests, different strategies, different means and resources and different political cultures. Yes, there still are common values coming from the support for liberal democracies, but the question is whether values prevail before interests or vice-versa.

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[9] White House, "Interim National Security Strategic Guidance," March 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf.

[10] Atlantic Council, "Transcript: President Macron on His Vision for Europe and the Future of Transatlantic Relations," February 5, 2021, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/news/transcripts/transcript-president-macron-on-his-vision-for-europe-and-the-future-of-transatlantic-relations/.

Firstly, the *American ideological polarization* is not yet spent. On the contrary, the flame of radicalization seems to reignite in the US politics while both parties struggle with their extremist factions. As president Biden suggested, there is no borderline today between domestic and foreign policy. This is a credible indication that US foreign policy and strategy are still unstable in the medium and long run and *Trumpism is not dead yet.* The results of the mid-term elections of November 2022 will show whether the wave of illiberal populism is receding or not.

Secondly, the European Union has to clarify the meanings of the long-discussed concept of *European Strategic Autonomy (ESA)*. For many of us, it is quite clear that ESA does not mean "a true European Army, to protect us against China, Russia and even the United States" (see note 5), as President Macron once said. There is no realistic perspective of seeing European forces replacing NATO in providing collective European defense and security. Without assuming *security guarantees* for the member states, European Strategic Autonomy could mean a waste of money, time and energy. Even more controversial, a hypothetic Buy European Act in which the EU member states would be asked to purchase European military technology instead of American systems and military equipment could create a lot of troubles between the allies. In the long run, it would be terribly disappointing to realize that the European Strategic Autonomy is about money, military procurements and the interests of the French defense industry to sell on the European market. The European Defense Fund (EDF), established officially in December 2017 with the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in the field of Defense, is intended to "provide a key contribution to Europe's strategic autonomy, protecting and defending its citizens. It will promote defense cooperation among companies and between EU countries to foster innovation and develop state-of-the-art defense technology and products. This, in turn, will lead to cost-savings for EU countries. The fund will coordinate, supplement and amplify national investments in defense."[11] From the slogan of using European common military technology to a Buy European Act in the defense industry there is

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[11] European Commission, "European Defence Fund," https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/defence/european-defence-fund_en, accessed in July 2021.

only one step that can be technically made based on a strong political will of the European leaders but with devastating consequences to NATO's coherence and credibility.

In this context, it is also important to take into consideration that NATO today does not mean only the United States of America and the EU member states, but the United Kingdom and Canada as well, two English-speaking liberal democracies with significant military forces and distinct political identity. Unfortunately, most of the debates and analyses regarding the future of NATO tend to ignore this aspect and believe that the North-Atlantic Alliance is just an affair between the US and the European Union, which is wrong. The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian crisis will be a test for the solidity of transatlantic relations and the Euro-Atlantic common vision for the future of Eastern Europe.

Therefore, it is not a surprise to see the same NATO Secretary General, just a few weeks after his first optimistic approach, saying in a clear message that "the EU cannot defend Europe."[12] Maybe his speech at the College of Europe in Bruges was influenced by a recent statement of the President of France in which Emmanuel Macron asked rhetorically: "Nobody can tell me that today's NATO is a structure that, in its foundations, is still pertinent. It was founded to face down the Warsaw Pact. There is no longer a Warsaw Pact."[13] Obviously, President Macron is not right but it is important to analyze his suggestion. NATO was not founded as a reaction to the Warsaw Pact, but vice-versa. The Washington Treaty was signed in April 1949, while the Warsaw Treaty came as a Soviet replica in 1955. Moreover, Russian ambitions and interests in East Central Europe did not vanish with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact in 1991 but they are still valid, as we know based on Russia's military and hybrid aggressions against sovereign republics in the region such as the Republic of Moldova (Transnistria 1992), Georgia (Abkhazia and South

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[12] Euractiv.com with AFP, "'The EU Cannot Defend Europe': NATO Chief," March 5, 2021, https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/news/the-eu-cannot-defend-europe-nato-chief/.

[13] Roula Khalaf, Ben Hall, Victor Mallet, "Emmanuel Macron: 'For Me, the Key is Multilateralism that Produces Results'," *Financial Times*, February 18, 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/d8b9629a-92b1-4e02-92b7-41e9152d56ea.

Ossetia 2008) and Ukraine (Crimea and Donbas 2014, and even nowadays). No rational voice can deny that the presence of US troops and NATO military capabilities remain essential to ensure deterrence against Russia, mainly on the Eastern Flank of the Alliance.

The reasons why NATO was established in 1949, strategically and geopolitically if not ideologically speaking, remain the same today: to protect and defend Europe against the perspective of being forced to become part of an Eurasian authoritarian project, to keep the Russian influence out, to ensure the strategic presence of the United States on the European continent and to maintain the strategic concept of the West within the paradigm of liberal democracies.

Conclusions

The upcoming *Conference on the Future of Europe* will also have to give clear and accountable answers to the questions related to the meanings and limits of the European Strategic Autonomy.

Recently, moderated and pragmatic approaches have started to appear, meant to reconcile the two visions. A Carnegie analysis by Erik Brattberg published at the end of January this year tries to rebalance and mitigate the conceptual cleavages and ideological tensions between the European Strategic Autonomy and the traditional transatlantic security option: "The renewed debate over strategic autonomy versus transatlantic security—as seen in the November 2020 disagreement between Macron and German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer—is mostly counterproductive. At worst, too much emphasis on unrealistic notions of autonomy risks fueling unnecessary divisions, including in Europe itself, by obscuring what everyone can agree on: a stronger and more capable Europe is commensurate with a vibrant and healthy transatlantic security partnership. It is time to move on from this debate and focus on building a stronger European pillar in NATO.

However, even if Biden adopts a more relaxed attitude to EU defense cooperation, the United States will remain skeptical of the EU's ability to deliver until it sees real, tangible progress. If Europe wants to be respected as a stronger partner, it should therefore focus on achieving practical results

that would make Washington more comfortable with a greater level of European autonomy."[14]

The debates on the fundamental security topic will continue on both sides of the Atlantic. *The NATO summit in 2021* will probably bring some clarifications in the transatlantic relations but most of the decision-making process related to Western security arrangements will be first conducted in the US and European politics separately. Only when the two main pillars of the West have concluded with regard to their grand vision will a real and effective negotiation between them become possible. And not only possible, but mandatory.

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[14] Erik Brattberg, "What Can Europe Offer Biden on Security and Defense?", *Carnegie*, 26 January 2021, https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/01/26/what-can-europe-offer-biden-on-security-and-defense-pub-83563.

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Turkey's New Strategic Outlook and NATO. A Neoclassical Realist Approach

ŞTEFAN-IOAN CIANGA

Introduction

Despite the fact that Turkey and Russia have been historical and geopolitical rivals and that Turkey's current medium-term rise to regional power status was bound to aggravate tensions between the two, the period 2015-2021 has seen a consistent pragmatic engagement of Russia by the Erdoğan administration. This development took place in the context of the crisis of the liberal world order and the ascendancy of unilateralism, transactionalism and nationalism during the Trump era.[1]

Turkey is the security hinge between Europe's eastern and southern strategic flanks and a critical player in the struggle between Russia and the West.[2] Turkey is also in the process of reasserting itself as a regional power in the medium-term. At the same time, its internal political institutions are evolving, presumably to some extent because of changes in external pressures, a process that has been termed the emergence of "post-tutelary New Turkey". Since 2017, recent developments in Turkey have begun to overshadow the key geostrategic position of this country and its foreign and security policy has begun to shift against the background of its deteriorating relations with the West and the perceived overlooking of its

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[1] Valentin Naumescu, *Politica marilor puteri în Europa Centrală şi de Est. 30 de ani de la sfârşitul Războiului Rece* [Great Power Politics in Central and Eastern Europe. Thirty Years since the End of the Cold War] (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2019), 119-44.

[2] John R. Allen, Frederick Ben Hodges, Julian Lindley-French, *Future War and the Defence of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 114.

security needs vis-à-vis terrorism and the Middle East by NATO and the Western allies.[3]

Russia has been in a long decline both institutionally and in regards to its comparative power distribution within the international system, a process that its elites are consciously trying to slow down or reverse. After the USSR collapsed under the weight of its ossified social-political system and failing economy, the new Russian state emerging in 1991 suddenly lost its ability to exercise the foreign policy of a superpower, and has entered into a highly unstable phase of adaptation to its post-imperial status.[4] A part of this adaptation has been the emergence of a project of hastening the transition to a multipolar world order and of balancing the geopolitical "West."

We believe it is urgently necessary to provide Western decision-makers with an account on the practical accuracy of the most popular theoretical tools used for foreign policy analysis and forecasting. For this paper, because of space constraints, we have chosen the lens of neoclassical realism, due to the historical popularity of the realist school among practitioners and decision-makers. Starting from neoclassical realist assumptions, our main objective is to (i) explain Turkey's foreign-policy behavior and (ii) evaluate whether and how this theoretical tool can be improved. Secondarily, we aim to (iii) asses the realist school itself in terms of usefulness and accuracy using this paper's subject as a case study. This paper aims to analyze from a neoclassical realist lens the role that systemic and geopolitical pressures and incentives play in the development of Turkey's current foreign policy behavior towards Russia versus the role of subsystemic factors in the decision-making process and policy formulation, such as elite perceptions of the security environment, political ideology,

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[3] Valentin Naumescu, "Stability, Ambiguity and Change in the Discourses of NATO Allies in the Black Sea Region: The Cases of Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey," *Croatian International Relations Review* 23, no. 80 (January 2017): 200-203, 205, https://doi.org/10.1515/cirr-2017-0025.

[4] Stanislav Secrieru, *Rusia după Imperiu* [Russia after Empire] (Iaşi: Institutul European, 2008), 47-49.

values and identity, state-society relations or institutional inertia. The paper focuses more on Turkey, as it is the actor whose behavior is more volatile, while Russia's is entirely consistent with its geopolitical interests.

Neoclassical realism

Neoclassical realism builds upon the central insight of structural realism about the constraints of the international system by looking within states to analyze how systemic pressures are registered and processed,[5] incorporating unit-level analysis in their models, positing that systemic pressures are filtered by subsystemic variables at the domestic and regional levels to produce foreign policy outcomes.[6] It analyses variables capable to mediate the international system's constraints such as governmental actors, institutions, decision-making processes,[7] as well as perception, values and other domestic level factors, while considering them analytically subordinate to systemic factors.[8] Working from the assumption that systemic factors constitute the overriding cause of states' strategic behavior, neoclassical realism takes into account cultural subsystemic factors, such as state leaders' perceptions of international relations and strategic culture, as well as institutional subsystemic factors, which are linked to state-society relations and domestic institutional arrangements.[9] These roughly correspond to Fukuyama's concepts of the "intangible institutions" versus the "tangible

[5] Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, "Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy*, eds. Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 13.

[6] Michael A. Jensen, Colin Elman, "Realisms," in *Security Studies. An Introduction*, eds. Paul D. Williams and Matt McDonald, 3rd ed. (London/ New York: Routledge, 2018), 26-27.

[7] William C. Wohlforth, "Realism and Foreign Policy," in *Foreign Policy. Theories, Actors, Cases*, eds. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, Tim Dunne, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 39-40.

[8] Nicholas Kitchen, "Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: A Neo–classical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 1 (January 2010): 118, https://doi.org/10. 1017/S026021050999053.

[9] Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 59.

institutions" of a state.[10] We contend that an additional dynamic can be construed as a dependent variable in such an analysis, what we call *internal geopolitics*. We believe that in the case of Turkey, the state possesses two competing geopolitical cores generating their own institutional and cultural variables, and that the dialectic of their power relations plays a role in Turkey's policy formation.[11]

Systemic pressures on the Turkish state

Turkey is a transcontinental regional power with increasingly global interests that is currently in the process of rising to systemic importance. It has major interests in the extended regions of the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia.[12] Having an Islamic historical ascendancy and cultural background (as the successor to the Ottoman Empire) and at the same time being a pillar of euro-Atlantic multilateral arrangements (as a member of NATO and OECD), Turkey has the potential to become an intermediary between the geopolitical West and the Islamic World as it re-emerges on the international stage as a major actor.[13] However, while it is a major OECD economy and a member of the G20 with growing and battle-proven military capabilities present on three continents,[14] it also has to contend with its complicated strategic position, being situated on a geopolitical faultline with a high conflict potential.[15]

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10 Francis Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay. From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy* (London: Profile Books, 2015), *passim*, but especially 313-21 and beyond.

11 Ştefan-Ioan Cianga, "Turcia – pol de putere la Marea Neagră. Geopolitica bicefală a Turciei" [Turkey – Power Pole at the Black Sea. Turkey's Two-Pronged Geopolitics], in *Război hibrid la Marea Neagră. De la fake-news la confruntare militară* [Hybrid Warfare at the Black Sea. From Fake News to Military Confrontation], eds. Cătălin Nae, Vasile Simileanu (Bucureşti: Top Form, 2019), *passim*, especially 210-16, 220.

12 George Vişan, "Mediterana de Est: cauzele şi mizele instabilităţii regionale" [The Eastern Mediterranean: Causes and Aims of Regional Instability], Policy paper no. 27 (Bucureşti: Institutul Diplomatic Român, 2020), 4.

13 Cianga, "Turkey," 209-10, 220 and *passim*.

14 Vişan, "Eastern Mediterranean," 4-6.

15 George Friedman, *Flashpoints*: *The Emerging Crisis in Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 2015), 224-37.

Turkey's foreign policy behavior has been characterized in recent years by a growing great power ambition, manifested in its increasingly pragmatic use of power politics instruments, which has made it an uncomfortable partner for its NATO allies.[16]

Russia has always posed a significant security threat to Turkey. During the years of Ottoman pre-eminence (14th-19th centuries), the Turkish state reigned over all twelve of its present-day neighbors, except Russia and Iran.[17] Between 1568 and 1917, the Russians and the Ottomans fought twelve major wars instigated by Russia, mostly won by Russia, which have consistently resulted in the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from the lands lost by the Ottoman Empire.[18] In the 19th century, Russian expansionism came at the expense of Ottoman Turkish interests in the Balkans, the greater Black Sea area and the Caucasus.[19] This is why, historically, Turkey has avoided confronting Russia and Iran, while being assertive towards neighbors such as Greece, Bulgaria, Iraq or Syria.[20] Russia, in contrast, regards Turkey through a winner mindset and is not overly cautious in asserting its interests towards its southern neighbor.[21]

Beyond being historical rivals, the geopolitical imperatives and primary security interests of Turkey and Russia are diametrically opposed.[22] Turkey's geopolitical core around the Sea of Marmara and the Straits is a commercial node of regional and global importance, linking the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, Europe and Asia, as well as being a strategic chokepoint capable of blocking the southern expansion of any Black Sea

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16 Vişan, "Eastern Mediterranean," 5-8.

17 Soner Çağaptay, *Erdoğan's Empire. Turkey and the Politics of the Middle East* (London/New York/Oxford/ New Delhi/ Sydney: I.B. Tauris, 2020), 137.

18 Soner Çağaptay, *The New Sultan. Erdoğan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 362.

19 Ovidiu Raeţchi, "Russia and Turkey: Enemies with Benefits. An Unexpected Duopoly for the Caucasus and the Middle East," GlobalFocus Center, 2021, 18-19, https://www.global-focus.eu/2021/05/russia-and-turkey-enemies-with-benefits-an-unexpected-duopoly-for-the-caucasus-and-the-middle-east/.

20 Çağaptay, *Erdoğan's Empire,* 137-39.

21 Raeţchi, "Russia and Turkey," 19.

22 Geopolitical Futures, "Why Turkey Won't Align with Russia," April 18, 2019, https://geopolitical futures.com/turkey-wont-align-russia/.

power.[23] It is in Turkey's direct interest to take advantage of its "strategic depth" by pursuing a close integration within the networks and institutions of the international order. In this sense, its relationship with the US is the most critical, followed closely by its access to European markets and capital. The end of the Cold War generated a structural problem in Turkish-American relations, as the two countries' interest have partially diverged, and they have been unable to find the avenue and format in which to regenerate their relationship.[24] The US's current disengagement from the Middle East creates both new dangers and opportunities for Turkey, as the void of authority could be filled by hostile actors but can also represent a space where Turkish influence can expand.

The strategic importance of a friendly Turkey for the defense of Europe is difficult to overstate.[25] Turkey possesses the second largest armed forces within NATO and hosts US troops, Air Force assets and nuclear weapons at the İncirlik A.B.; it also hosts the early warning radar for the NATO missile defense system in Poland and Romania.[26] Turkey's economic development has allowed the growth of an advanced and competitive domestic military industry.[27] Its increasingly capable military assets are present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Aegean, the Eastern Mediterranean, northern Cyprus, Iraq, Syria, Azerbaijan, Somalia, Afghanistan and Qatar.[28] Furthermore, Turkey's growing military expeditionary posture directly challenges Russian interests in North Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Caucasus.[29] . However, while Moscow seeks to portray Turkey's decision to acquire the S-400 missile system as an alignment between Erdoğan and

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[23] Stratfor, "The Geopolitics of Turkey: Searching for More," August 3, 2010, https://worldview.stratfor.com/ article/geopolitics-turkey-searching-more.

[24] Soli Özel, quoted by Dorian Jones, "Anti-Americanism Rises in Turkey as US-Turkish Tensions Escalate," Voice of America News, August 23, 2018, https://www.voanews.com/ middle-east/anti-americanism-rises-turkey-us-turkish-tensions-escalate.

[25] Allen, Hodges, Lindley-French, *Future* War, 115.

[26] Vişan, "Eastern Mediterranean," 4.

[27] Vişan, "Eastern Mediterranean," 6-7.

[28] Vişan, "Eastern Mediterranean,", 6-7.

[29] Can Kasapoğlu, "Turkey's Growing Military Expeditionary Posture," *Terrorism Monitor* 18, no. 10 (May 2020), https://jamestown.org/program/turkeys-growing-military-expeditionary-posture/.

Putin, Turkey is a front-line NATO member with a vital strategic role to pay in Europe's security architecture.[30] And, at the same time that Turkey acquired Russian-made S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems (unacceptable for NATO), officially for tactical reasons,[31] an intense cold war has developed between Russia and Turkey in Syria (since 2011), Libya (since 2019) and Nagorno-Karabakh (in 2020), where they support antagonists that have come into direct military confrontation with each other.[32] However, the relationship between Turkey and the West is deteriorating and Russia tries to use this tension to paralyze NATO.[33] This situation is compounded by the fact that economically, Turkey is far more dependent on Russia than Russia is on Turkey,[34] as the Turkish-Russian relationship is characterized by ***asymmetric interdependence***. Russia has been Turkey's major energy provider for decades,[35] especially after the Iranian sanctions. The asymmetric nature of the relationship means that the "exit costs" are higher for Turkey than they are for Russia and therefore there are limits to compartmentalization. In fact, recent research[36] has shown that Russia and Turkey do not compartmentalize their economic relationship and when geopolitical problems arise, the competition also becomes geoeconomic.

A major problem is that Turkey perceives the US as a destabilizing factor in the Middle East,[37] especially due to its support for the Kurdish

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30 Allen, Hodges, Lindley-French, *Future War*, 115-18.

31 Mustafa Kibaroloğlu, "On Turkey's Missile Defense Strategy: The Four Faces of the S-400 Deal Between Turkey and Russia," *SAM Papers* 16, Center for Strategic Research, 2019, 1-13, http://sam.gov.tr/pdf/sam-papers/SAM-Papers-No.-16.pdf.

32 Vişan, "Eastern Mediterranean," 1-11.

33 Allen, Hodges, Lindley-French, *Future* War, 115 et sq.

34 William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, 3rd ed. (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), 208.

35 Senem Aydın-Düzgit, Evren Balta, Andrew O'Donohue, "Turkey, Russia and the West: Reassessing Persistent Volatility, Asymmetric Interdependence, and the Syria Conflict," Istanbul Policy Center, 2020, 9, http://www.tepsa.eu/turkey-russia-and-the-west-reassessing-persistent-volatility-asymmetric-interdependence-and-the-syria-conflict-senem-aydin-duzgit-evren-balta-and-andrew-odonohue-ipc-turkey/.

36 Evren Balta, "The State of Russia-Turkey Relations," oral presentation at the conference *Cooperative Competition or Competitive Cooperation? Russian-Turkish Relations Today*, ELIAMEP panel, May 5, 2021.

37 Vişan, "Eastern Mediterranean," 8.

militant group YPG, while the US is broadly concerned with Turkey's anti-Western and illiberal turn, but is especially critical towards its pragmatic cooperation with Russia. Relations with the EU have been similarly strained since 2014, as a result of the deterioration of democracy and the rule of law in Turkey, especially since the 2016 abortive coup, as well as the 2015 migrant crisis.[38] While Erdoğan had originally opportunistically used the accession process and the reforms it entailed to dismantle Turkey's tutelary state,[39] the Western powers' exclusionary attitudes, especially towards Turkey's Muslim majority, hindered negotiations.[40] We believe that this attitude in some EU circles and the perception that the accession process was politicized contributed significantly to Erdoğan's populist and authoritarian turn in the 2010s.[41] Turkey has also been currently embroiled, since 2020, in a complex confrontation with Greece over the delimitation of maritime zones and aerial space in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean and over the conflict in Cyprus.[42] Its ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean, where it has performed hydrocarbon explorations in regions it regards as disputed has exacerbated its conflict with Greece and Egypt and brought it into direct collision with France, which saw its interest threatened, perceives its government as overtly Islamist and its advocacy for worldwide causes popular with Muslims as internally destabilizing for the EU.[43] Turkey has compounded this perception by announcing its "Blue Homeland" (*Mavi Vatan*) doctrine, which can be interpreted as irredentist and definitely invites confrontation.[44]

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[38] Raluca Moldovan, "The European Union and Turkey: The End of a Dream?," in *The New European Union and Its Global Strategy: From Brexit to PESCO*, ed. Valentin Naumescu (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 208-10.

[39] Moldovan, "The European Union and Turkey," 203-205.

[40] Emilia Nicoleta Schiop, Mircea Brie, "The Divergences in the Negotiation Process between Turkey and the European Union," *Studii Europene* 11 (2018): 125-26, 137.

[41] Cianga, "Turkey," 218.

[42] Cianga, "Turkey," 218.

[43] Cianga, "Turkey," 218.

[44] Cengiz Çandar, "Turkey's Blue Homeland Doctrine: Signaling Perpetual Conflict in the Mediterranean and Rough Waters Ahead," *The Turkey Analyst*, August 26, 2020, https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/648-turkey's-blue-homeland-doctrine-signaling-perpetual-conflict-in-the-mediterranean-and-rough-waters-ahead.html.

However, Turkey has recently been cooperating closely with Italy, an EU country which also has vital interests in the Mediterranean.[45]

Due to being subject to systemic pressure from Russia, Turkey lacks negotiation power vis-à-vis its Western partners in general and its partners in Western Europe in particular. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Turkey and Russia have used one another to increase their influence in all of the conflicts in which they were involved. Thus, **Turkey's drive to find leverage with allies synchronized with Russia's drive to destabilize the Western alliance**, without creating a strategic relationship between the two countries. For instance, in the Middle East neither Turkey nor Russia is an order-setting actor and, in fact, their collaboration was to a very much extent driven by the absence of an actor with an order-setting agenda that would be both capable and willing to militarily and financially back that order.[46] It is therefore the ***vacuum of authority created by US retrenchment*** that has driven the relationship. In the same vein, the importance of Kurdish transnationalism, terrorism and separatism as an immediate security threat for policymakers in Ankara is difficult to overstate. It was the presence of this threat (together with the Russian intervention and the growing ties between the US and the YPG) which had completely changed Turkish strategic priorities in Syria from toppling the Assad regime according to the lines of Ahmet Davutoğlu's Islamist (but also US-aligned) *neo-Ottomanism* to preventing the creation of an autonomous Kurdish entity along its border.[47] This change of perspective has in fact initially opened the door for Turkish-Russian coordination and eventually collaboration in Syria. Only in Syria did the threat perception between Turkey and Russia have the stable component of denying access to the Western geopolitical vector,[48] and even in that case, it was not for reasons of grand strategy, but rather due to Western actions vis-à-vis the YPG

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[45] Michaël Tanchum, "Italy and Turkey's Europe-to-Africa Commercial Corridor: Rome and Ankara's Geopolitical Symbiosis Is Creating a New Mediterranean Strategic Paradigm," AIES Fokus 10 (2020), 1-5, https://www.aies.at/download/2020/AIES-Fokus-2020-10.pdf.

[46] Balta, "The State of Russia-Turkey Relations."

[47] Seçkin Köstem, "Russian-Turkish Cooperation in Syria: Geopolitical Alignment with Limits," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (February 2020): 5-8, https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571. 2020.1719040.

[48] Balta, "The State of Russia-Turkey Relations."

resulting from a misperception of the importance of the issue for the Turkish state.

The fact that Turkey is especially cautious in confronting Russia in theatres such as the Black Sea,[49] where Russia enjoys local superiority backed by a comprehensive anti-access area-denial umbrella,[50] points only to subsystemic filtering factors such as electoral concerns in the face of the risks posed by a major conflict or uncertainty about escalation dominance, as Turkey currently has a major shortcoming in addressing intra-war deterrence (controlling the escalatory patterns within an ongoing conflict), which has long been a major deficiency in its defense posture.[51] In fact, divergent overall goals in two of the regions of concern (the Caucasus and the Black Sea) and only limited alignment of some minimal goals in parts of the third region (specifically in Syria, as interests still diverge sharply in Libya and the Eastern Mediterranean) point to strong systemic forces pushing both sides into a conflictual relationship. It is worth noting that Turkish attempts at collaboration with Russia are not without a strategic logic. For instance, while Turkey tries to counterbalance Russia in the Caucasus through its relationship with Azerbaijan and presence in the Karabakh conflict,[52] Russia's diplomatic maneuvers won it an important strategic position: currently it is militarily present in different formats on the territory of all three South Caucasian states (Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia), regardless of those states' consent or willingness. Therefore, despite Azerbaijan's military victory on the ground and Turkey's role in it,

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[49] Even Balta, Mitat Çelikpala, "Turkey and Russia: Historical Patterns and Contemporary Trends in Bilateral Relations," in *The Oxford Handbook of Turkish Politics*, ed. Güneş Murat Tezcür (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 8, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190064891.013.12

[50] Octavian Manea, George Vişan, Armand Goşu, Eugenia Gusilov, "Black Sea in Access Denial Age," Special RoEC Report, January 2016, 8-18, https://www.roec.biz/project/black-sea-in-access-denial-age/.

[51] Can Kasapoğlu, "Turkey's Burgeoning Defense Technological and Industrial Base and Expeditionary Military Policy," *Insight Turkey* 22, no. 3 (2020): 11-13, https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2020223.08.

[52] Can Kasapoğlu, "Veiled Counter-Balancing: The Peacekeeping 'Arrangement' Between Turkey and Russia in Karabakh," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 17, no. 181 (December 2020), https://jamestown.org/program/veiled-counter-balancing-the-peacekeeping-arrangement-between-turkey-and-russia-in-karabakh/.

at a grand strategy level, Russia dominates the region, despite Turkey's attempts to counterbalance it.

Russia has imposed geographic limits on Turkey's zone of influence in Libya, Syria, and the Caucasus.[53] Meanwhile Turkey has used the crisis in Ukraine to bolster its transatlantic credentials by supporting Kiev.[54] Thus Turkey and Russia, while having fundamentally different objectives and interests, coordinate their policies in order to carve out separate zones of influence through support for opposite sides in various conflicts and on various issues.[55] It is more likely, therefore, that Turkey has since the early 2010s reverted to its unique strategic perspective dominated by the complex security threats of its diverse environment.[56] The change should not be described as an illiberal turn to the East, but as a sovereigntist and opportunist **search for strategic autonomy** driven by the perception of Western unreliability, American retrenchment and lack of leadership and by the **permissive international environment which is shifting to a new era of great-power competition**.[57] Erdoğan exploits gaps in the international system and finds opportunities to play Russia and the United States against each other. [58] According to Ret. Gens. John Allen and Ben Hodges,[59] the new sovereigntist turn in Turkish foreign policy behavior is merely a return to traditional Byzantine and Ottoman patters, and Europe should adapt to the changed Turkish threat perceptions by recognizing its unique perspective and coming up with a new security framework that would reset the relationship on the realist basis of mutual interests.

For Russia the equation is much more simple as it is in its interest, in its full-spectrum competition with the West, to prioritize taking advantage

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53 Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, "Turkey Will Not Return to the Western Fold. Ankara's Assertive Foreign Policy Is Here to Stay," *Foreign Affairs*, May 19, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2021-05-19/turkey-will-not-return-western-fold.

54 Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, Johana Hosa, "West Wishes: Turkey's Growing Relationship with Ukraine," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, May 12, 2021, https://ecfr.eu/article/west-wishes-turkeys-growing-relationship-with-ukraine/.

55 Aydıntaşbaş, Hosa, "West Wishes."

56 Allen, Hodges, Lindley-French, *Future War*, 115-18.

57 Aydıntaşbaş, "Turkey Will Not Return."

58 Aydıntaşbaş, "Turkey Will Not Return."

59 Allen, Hodges, Lindley-French, *Future War*, 115-18.

of any vulnerability in the multilateral alliance system over punctual short or medium-term advantages regionally. It has thus speculated Turkey's dissatisfaction with Western actions towards its perceived security needs in order to encourage its dissenting behavior towards NATO formats and policies.

Internal geopolitics as a subsystemic factor in Turkey

We believe that in Turkey's case a powerful subsystemic factor explaining its foreign policy behavior is what we call *internal geopolitics*. Turkey is structured into two distinct geopolitical cores that compete with each other in terms of both soft power and hard power.[60] While most of the country's territory lies in Asia, its traditional power center that has constituted the core of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires is the region around the Sea of Marmara and the Turkish Straits,[61] which we shall call Rumelia, as it had previously included the larger Thrace area; today it also includes the Western reaches of Asia Minor. It is a secure, capital-rich region with a long imperial tradition, connected to global commercial networks, which has given rise to an extrovert, cosmopolite and internationally engaged political culture.[62] Its main security threat has been Russia for hundreds of years, its main current imperative is the preservation of the international (Western) alliance structure that currently guarantees its security, and its main instruments are economic, soft power tools and naval power. On the other hand, Turkey's Asian side, Anatolia, a demographic reservoir associated with Islamist impulses, long considered peripheral,[63] has risen in importance after the Ottoman contraction and as successive republican governments improved its infrastructure.[64] Anatolia is a less productive region that exists in a security environment characterized by chronic instability and military conflict along its borders.[65] Its difficult terrain

[60] Cianga, "Turkey," 210.
[61] Stratfor, "The Geopolitics of Turkey."
[62] Cianga, "Turkey," 211.
[63] Geopolitical Futures, "Turkey's Geopolitical Imperatives."
[64] Geopolitical Futures, "Turkey's Geopolitical Imperatives."
[65] Cianga, "Turkey," 211-12.

has historically made social and economic integration problematic, while the area of contiguous Kurdish habitation to the southeast represents a constant security threat to the Turkish state. It is, however, rich in resources. These factors have generated an insular and conservative political culture whose main imperative is territorial control, independence of action and territorial hegemony over its Middle Eastern neighbors.[66]

It is worth noting that when AKP first came to power in the early 2000s, they had to cater to Rumelian sensibilities internally by moderating their platform, while Davutoğlu's *neo-Ottomanism* was essentially a Rumelian foreign policy in Islamic garb. On the other hand, the switch to *Erdoganism* with its search for limited autonomy from the West since 2010 can be explained by the Anatolian pole's growth in power and influence. Similarly, the purchase of the S-400 missile system finds its explanation in Anatolia's imperative of establishing independence of action and its preoccupation with military security.[67] In fact, Erdoğan's engagement with Russia falls within the inward-looking Anatolian logic, as it **has helped Turkey increase its foreign policy autonomy**, especially its negotiating power towards its European partners.[68] We believe this to be a major factor in explaining the recent collaborative pattern between Turkey and Russia.

The dialectic between these two internal geopolitical poles of power shapes the way in which the Turkish state responds to systemic pressures and regional security needs and the current search for limited strategic autonomy[69] has probably been driven by the rise in importance of the Anatolian heartland. It is important to remember, however, that according to this model, the Rumelian core is still the more powerful force, and we can expect it to eventually express its own security needs and interests institutionally in some shape.

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[66] Cianga, "Turkey," 216.

[67] Xander Snyder, "Turkey in the Bigger Picture," Geopolitical Futures, July 29, 2019, https://geopolitical futures.com/turkey-in-the-bigger-picture/.

[68] Balta, "The State of Russia-Turkey Relations."

[69] Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, "Turkey and the Quest for Limited Autonomy from the West," *Eastern Focus* 4 (2020): 69-73, https://www.eastern-focus.eu/2020/07/turkey-and-the-quest-for-limited-autonomy-from-the-west/.

Cultural subsystemic factors

For neoclassical realists, grand strategy formulation consists of three phases: strategic assessment, strategic formulation and strategic implementation, with the elites' perception crucial in the phase of strategic assessment, while the other two phases depend on state capacity. Elite perceptions of the state's security environment are determined by either their strategic culture or political calculus.[70] Political calculus determined AKP's process of moderation in the early 2000s, as they were trying to capture Turkey's political center.[71] This might have had an effect on Turkey's persistence in its EU integration attempt, which could not have occurred without political will for reform.[72] Davutoğlu's *neo-Ottomanism*, on the other hand, was an instance of elite perception shaping policy, as the liberal-Islamic synthesis he proposed has historical antecedents in both Turgut Özal and the Young Ottomans. Another instance of elite perception is the obsession of the current Erdoğan administration with the perceived American involvement in the 2016 coup plot, which has played a major role in the souring of relations between Turkey and the US.

Related to this, as an effect of the ideological mainstreaming of extremism in Turkey, especially in its Islamic form, is the rise in conspiracist sentiment, not only among the public, but among the political elite, and not only among Islamists, but among secularists and nationalists as well.[73] This makes the Turkish leaders' worldview markedly different from those of their Western counterparts. Current Turkish foreign policy behavior, while less ideologically Islamist, is definitely more non-Western in a geopolitical sense. In particular, the *Mavi Vatan* concept sems the illustrate the anti-international-system fusion between "anti-imperialist" and "Eurasianist"

[70] Balkan Devlen, Özgür Özdamar, "Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Crises," in *Rethinking Realism in International Relations. Between Tradition and Innovation*, eds. Annette Freyberg-Inan, Ewan Harrison, Patrick James (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 137-56.

[71] Ahmet İnsel, *Turcia lui Erdoğan* [Erdogan's Turkey] (Bucureşti: Corint, 2017), 84-93.

[72] Schiop, Brie, "The Divergences in the Negotiation Process", 133-34.

[73] Svante E. Cornell, "Erbakan, Kısakürek, and the Mainstreaming of Extremism in Turkey," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Hudson Institute, June 4, 2018, https://www.hudson.org/research/14375-erbakan-k-sak-rek-and-the-mainstreaming-of-extremism-in-turkey.

secular forces empowered in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt with the traditional Islamist hostility towards the West.

Also, Erdoğan's need to consolidate his post-coup rule, perceptions on regime security and the threat that liberal values might pose to it, as well as electoral considerations, are among other cultural subsystemic factors. From a realist perspective all these subsystemic elements can do no more than shape systemic pressures. They can shape *how* events develop but not their general direction.

However, the issue of elite perceptions is a salient point, as both Turkish and Russian leaders do indeed believe they have more to gain from an anarchic international system than from a rules-based order.[74]

Institutional subsystemic factors

The most important "institutional" factor worth noting is related to Turkey's demographic structure. Turkey faces internal destabilizing pressure from its unassimilated Kurdish minority in SE Anatolia, which can threaten its territorial integrity through Kurdish separatism and destabilize its society through PKK terrorism.[75] It is of note that the PKK has historical ties with Russia/USSR which has supported the group since the 1970s.[76] This factor alters all other policy considerations, as seen in the severe underestimation on the part of American policy-makers of the impact their partnership with the YPG would have on the Turkish side.

Another institutional factor is the growing similarity in the decision-making processes in Turkey and Russia, characterized by personalized policymaking, democratic deficit, lack of public oversight, but which are also perceived by the two sides as efficient in a chaotic security environment.[77] This similarity in the decision-making process has facilitated the coordination between the two sides and means that the relationship is not entirely dependent on leadership diplomacy. It is worth noting, however,

[74] Raeţchi, "Russia and Turkey," 20.

[75] Geopolitical Futures, "Turkey's Geopolitical Imperatives."

[76] Çağaptay, *The New Sultan,* 371.

[77] Aydın-Düzgit, Balta, O'Donohue, "Turkey, Russia and the West," 7-8.

the continuity in Turkey between current developments and the previous Kemalist tutelary state. The reason behind Turkey's failure to internalize the West's "common values" was the anxiety of the tutelary forces about losing their privileged position within the secularist regime.[78] The same forces played a role in the 2016 coup as the various cliques jostled for power. After the coup attempt, Erdoğan proceeded with a massive purge of state and civilian institutions, but due to the lack of professional military and security expertise among the AKP cadres, he had to rely on nationalist officers and bureaucrats. This had as a result the escalation of sovereigntist policies, as well as the consideration of alternative strategies such as Eurasianism, that envision Turkey's rapprochement with Russia and China.[79] It is only in this context that Erdoğan's government has appropriated the "Blue Homeland" doctrine of maritime supremacy, which had previously been the brainchild of "anti-imperialist" secularists.[80] This factor also covers the **presence of a powerful pro-Russian constituency in Turkey** (within the Islamist, secularist and nationalist sectors, present in both political parties and the state bureaucracy) that is deeply suspicious of Turkey's Western allies, but no pro-Turkish constituency in Russia.[81] However, factors such as the presence of liberal Islamists, the pro-Western alignment of Davutoğlu's pan-Islamist foreign policy after 2008, the presence of anti-Western secularists both on the Eurasianist left and on the Nationalist right that has re-discovered its Atatürkist anti-imperialism, force us to contest the idea that the component of Islamic identity or political expression of Islamic identity is at issue.

As an institutional subsytemic factor affecting policy outcomes, of particular note is also the explanation for acquiring the Russian-made S-400 missile system not as a tactical necessity, but as a security insurance by

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[78] İhsan Dağı, "Rus yanlısı darbe ve Ergenekon" [Pro-Russia Coup and Ergenekon], *Time Türk*, January 13, 2009, https://www.haksozhaber.net/rus-yanlisi-darbe-ve-ergenekon-8737yy.htm.

[79] Stockholm Center for Freedom, "July 15. Erdoğan's Coup," July 5, 2017, https://stockholmcf.org/15-july-erdogans-coup/.

[80] Çandar, "Turkey's Blue Homeland Doctrine."

[81] Aydın-Düzgit, Balta, O'Donohue, "Turkey, Russia and the West," 10.

Erdoğan against future attempts by parts of the military to unseat him using Air Force assets.[82]

A further point is that both sides believe that in the eventuality of a regime change or even an internal political evolution, the future leadership will be more hostile so as to as mark a directional break from the current one.[83]

From an institutional perspective, the mutual entanglement between Russia and Turkey, as well as aspects touched upon, such as Turkey's energy dependence on Russia and especially the structural inability to compartmentalize, make the relationship more volatile. The personalization of the decision-making process and the deterioration of Turkish state institutions similarly contribute to this volatility. In this context, if an informal agreement doubled by a crisis management mechanism does indeed exist in a form approximating the hypothesis recently put forth by Ovidiu Raeţchi,[84] it is, from this perspective, a testament to the enduring strength of state institutions in Turkey, as the risk of a major escalation is very real and it is in the interest of all sides that the conflict be managed.

Conclusions

Systemic explanations are not sufficient to account for Turkey's foreign policy behavior. While the current international environment, favoring a sharp turn towards protectionism, nationalism and illiberalism, might elucidate some of Turkey's decisions since 2010, the full scope of its behavior, and especially its oscillations cannot be explained simply by systemic pressures and structural incentives.

In particular, systemic power distribution would have favored a turn towards neutrality in the 1990s, while elements of Davutoğlu's flexible foreign policy of openness and diplomatic engagement should be fixtures of Turkish strategic and political thought, based on the economic and strategic interests of Turkey's Rumelian core. And yet what happened was first a

[82] Tom Karako, "Coup-proofing? Making Sense of Turkey's S-400 Decision," Center for Strategic & International Studies, July 15, 2019, https://www.csis.org/analysis/coup-proofing-making-sense-turkeys-s-400-decision.

[83] Raeţchi, "Russia and Turkey," 18-19.

[84] Raeţchi, "Russia and Turkey," 16.

perpetuation of the Atlantic alliance based on threat assessments, followed by engaging internationalism with an Islamic as well as a liberal tinge, followed by a defensive pursuit of strategic autonomy, followed by assertive regional and global power politics. Taking in account subsystemic variables seems obligatory.

From a neoclassical realist perspective, the recent pattern of Turkish-Russian engagement is not one of cooperation, but of cooperative competition that is structural, determined mostly by external pressures (changes in the security environment, evolution of the international system, void of authority due to deteriorating liberal order). Elite threat perceptions and institutional factors affect regional developments as Turkish and Russian decision-makers realize that advancing their own immediate interest is impossible without some degree of policy coordination with the other side when they have mutual expectations (even if minimal expectations).[85] Thus, the two sides take short-term advantage of limited cooperation in some areas while maintaining a long-term competitive stance.

Systemic pressures are to be expected to overcome subsystemic filtering factors over the medium-term – Turkey is expected to pivot towards the West regardless of political regime, due to pressure from Western actors, its increasingly difficult security environment and divergent geopolitical interests with Russia. Furthermore, **the main independent variable is**, in this light, **Western policy towards Turkey**. In the words of Lt. Gen. (ret.) Ben Hodges, "We've got to figure out a way to ensure Turkey never wants to leave the Alliance. Regimes change but the geography never changes, so we need to think long term about this vital relationship."[86]

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[85] Balta, "The State of Russia-Turkey Relations."

[86] LTG. Ben Hodges (Ret.), interview, June 12, 2021.

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Between Russian and Chinese Expansionism. NATO and Its Challenges

ADRIAN IONUȚ BOGDAN

Introduction

The importance of the topic

This year, in December, we will commemorate three decades since the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991-2021), 30 years of post-Cold War, but not without events at least as high in intensity as the cold conflict.

The year 1991 definitively changed the world, the global order known until then, the bipolarity represented by the two great powers, the USA and the USSR, disappeared and was replaced by the global hegemony of the US for the next two decades. This landmark event of the turn of the century and millennium made a clear contribution to the world we see today. Although the post-Cold War period began with an American (North Atlantic) hegemony, we can see that things have evolved slightly towards an apparent multipolar world, but in recent years it is heading towards a new bipolarity in which, this time, Russia will be replaced by China.

For NATO, the end of the Cold War was crucial. The Warsaw Pact disappeared, and for the North Atlantic Organization the fundamental question of the necessity of its own existence appeared in the context in which the ideological and military threat of the communist bloc had disappeared. NATO has finally found an answer to this question and has continued as a military alliance aimed at ensuring and maintaining peace, as well as the fight against terrorism. However, NATO is witnessing a Chinese rise, but also a strong sense of re-emergence from the Russian Federation, both wanting international reaffirmation and changing the current status quo as soon as possible.

Although it currently has 30 member states, NATO faces the biggest challenge since the end of the Cold War. On the one hand, the alliance must respond firmly and as effectively as possible to Russia's recent demonstrations of power. On the other hand, it must be prepared to cope with the economic and military expansion that China is displaying not only in Central and Southeast Asia, but worldwide.

Motivation for choosing the topic

The topic of this paper is of personal interest, and this paper summarizes and proposes to take an analytical look at the development of relations between NATO, Russia and China after the end of the Cold War, but also the power relations between them.

It is an important and interesting topic for a rather volatile world in terms of stability and status quo. The transition from US unipolarity, hence NATO, to a rather short multipolarity and the arrival of an American-Chinese bipolarity suggests a global order that has been changed not only by the events of 1989-1991, but which is definitely changed by the new rise of states that lost the Cold War and are eager to reaffirm themselves again.

Research questions

This paper aims to show the threats that NATO faces, to show the relations between the alliance, China and Russia, but also how they have evolved in the last 30 years.

The main question that this paper will try to answer is: "Will NATO be prepared to respond to the threat posed by Russia and China?", as well as questions regarding the development of relations between NATO, Russia and China in the future and whether Russia and China will succeed in changing the current status quo.

NATO, from triumph to challenges

Victory in 1991

The winter of 1991 brought fundamental changes at the international level, perhaps even more important than the anti-communist revolutions of

1989 in Central and Eastern Europe. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the much-feared superpower state, the opponent and the main threat of the US and NATO for over 40 years disappeared from history forever.

Just two years before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact, the communist military alliance that brought together all the states in the Eastern bloc, disappeared as a result of the anti-communist revolutions of 1989. The fall of communist regimes in Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Bulgaria and Hungary led to the dissolution of the military alliance and left the Soviet Union alone in the face of the North Atlantic Alliance. After the fall of the Warsaw Pact, NATO enjoyed the absolute victory against its military and ideological opponent and remained the strongest military alliance in the world.

The events of the last decade of the second millennium brought a dramatic change on the global stage and a real surprise for NATO and the United States, with the famous historian and military Andrew J. Bacevich saying: "From Washington's perspective, 1989 was the Year Zero."[1] The euphoria of that Cold War victory opened the dawn of a new era for the United States and NATO, a period that Andrew J. Bacevich calls the Age of Illusions. Francis Fukuyama's own book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, captured the euphoria of the victory of Western democracies over communist regimes and shows that the euphoria was real and the joy of the end of the Cold War was just as real.

A new purpose

For NATO, the fall of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union were major events and brought the alliance to a turning point. Should NATO continue its existence or not after the military and ideological opponent disappeared? This was the main question that the United States and its allies asked themselves in early 1990. The question was answered after the 1991 NATO Summit in Rome that came with The Alliance's New Strategic

[1] Andrew J. Bacevich, *Epoca iluziilor. Cum și-a irosit America victoria în Războiul Rece* [The Age of Illusions: How America Squandered Its Cold War Victory], trans. Gabriel Tudor (București: Litera Publishing House, 2021), 38.

Concept, a new concept that defined the new ambitions and goals of the North Atlantic Alliance for the future. Despite the disappearance of the Soviet threat and the Warsaw Pact, NATO continued its mission as a military alliance.

NATO's argument for the continued existence of the alliance was focused on the fact that the alliance had ensured the security of the European continent for almost half a century, with European countries becoming strong partners, which ensured a better integration. On the other hand, no one knew the troubled situation of Russia at that time or the developments of the states detached from the former USSR, so NATO remained a welcome security measure in an international context that was not thought to be clear enough.

Since the early 1990, NATO has taken on a role in maintaining peace and security not only on the North Atlantic perimeter, but also outside it. NATO member forces were also actively involved in the wars in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and Afghanistan. The Alliance also took up the fight against terrorism, especially after 9/11, when Article 5 was activated for the first time in the Alliance's history.

The post-Cold War enlargement of NATO (1999-2020)

The expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization after the end of the Cold War was extremely prominent at European level, and if NATO started in 1989 from 16 member states, it would reach 30 member states in 2020 with the accession of North Macedonia. Doubling the number of NATO members was also due to an "open door policy."

At the same time, for NATO, the enlargement policy was very clear and established by the founding Treaty of the Alliance. "NATO's open door policy is based on Article 10 of its founding treaty. Any decision to invite a country to join the Alliance is taken by the North Atlantic Council on the basis of consensus among all Allies. No third country has a say in such deliberations."[2]

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[2] NATO, "Enlargement," last modified May 5, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_ 49212.htm.

After the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the decision was made to reintegrate the former communist states into the North Atlantic and European structures. This decision also came in the context of the new objectives assumed by NATO and in the context of a distrust in post-Soviet Russia. NATO expansion began right between the 1989 revolutions and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, in 1990 with the Reunification of Germany, when East Germany (the former German Democratic Republic) was reunited with the Federal Republic of Germany, becoming part of NATO and the European Union at the same time.

The first wave of post-Cold War NATO expansion took place in 1999, with the entry of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic into the alliance. This enlargement, just 10 years after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, was a strong signal of NATO's role on the international stage. Known as the wave of Central European accession, the entry of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic into NATO confirmed that the North Atlantic Alliance was ready to receive all the former communist bloc states, which was a matter of great concern for the Russian Federation and gave the impression of a new Cold War.

Another enlargement, perhaps even more important than the one mentioned earlier, was the accession of seven countries from Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. These nations were first invited to begin accession talks during the 2002 Prague Summit and joined NATO shortly before the 2004 Istanbul Summit. With Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania being NATO states, the Russian Federation felt directly threatened and this materialized in the actions of preventing Georgia and Ukraine from becoming members of NATO.

Albania and Croatia joined on April 1, 2009, and the most recent member states to join NATO were Montenegro in 2017 and Northern Macedonia in 2020. However, the open door policy does not end here, as NATO officially recognizes three other applications: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Ukraine. Future NATO accessions are an interesting topic of discussion and analysis for the future, a topic that will definitely influence the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, but also of the People's Republic of China.

NATO 2021

The NATO 2021 summit held on June 14 this year in Brussels was an important moment for the alliance, being the first summit of the post-Trump era. The summit's decisions on further strengthening the alliance reaffirmed the importance of the eastern flank. At the same time, the approach to China in the final statement was a balanced one. On the one hand, it was shown that the attitude of this actor is an assertive one, representing a systemic challenge, but at the same time we must point out that NATO wants to maintain a constructive dialogue where possible.

Lastly, the final declaration of the NATO summit reaffirmed support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, within their internationally recognized borders in the context of Russian aggression in the region.

Also in 2021, NATO allies decided that cyber-attacks could activate the provisions of Article 5, which is a first and comes in response to the recent cyber-attacks launched by the Russian Federation. The year 2021 brings a new beginning for the alliance.

Russia, three decades of post-Soviet era

Dissolution of the USSR

The process of dissolving the Soviet Union really began in 1989 after the Malta Summit when the last President of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, acknowledged the disappearance of communist regimes in the Eastern bloc and accepted the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.

Subsequent events, well known to the international public, can be summed up by the Soviet crisis followed by the loss of the Eastern Bloc, a crisis that would degenerate into a coup and then the implosion of the Soviet colossus. Against the background of the economic crisis inside the Soviet Union, strong national waves from the Baltic countries, but also Belarus or Ukraine heralded the end of the Union. Russia itself had broken away from its own Soviet profile by electing Boris Yeltsin as President of Russia, with

Gorbachev's resignation in December only a legal consecration of the Soviet Union's evaporation. Following the dissolution of the USSR, 15 new states appeared on the world map, many of which agreed to be part of an organization, at least symbolically, called the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The disintegration and loss of the Soviet Empire was a real frustration for the Kremlin regime, and President Vladimir Putin did not shy away from saying this in 2005 before the Russian Parliament: "The disappearance of the Soviet Union is the greatest geopolitical disaster of the twentieth century."[3] Affected by the unequal competition with the United States, Russia was in an extremely difficult economic situation. The attempt to use Poland's shock therapy by Russian economists failed, and the prestige of the Russian Federation reached a rather low level for the former world superpower. Against this background, Boris Yeltsin believed that by sacrificing the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, Russia would have a chance to receive help from the West, but Westerners viewed the former enemy state with suspicion and were unwilling to cooperate with it.

Lack of cooperation with the West would instill an acute sense of betrayal in Russian politicians, since they saw the West as responsible for the destruction of the Soviet Union. The national frustration can also be seen in the work of a great French academic, Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, who stated in the book *The USSR Is Dead, Long Live Russia* that: "Russia had abandoned a security system to which it had been so attached, convinced that it could it relied, instead, on a symmetrical abandonment on the part of the West."[4] The continued existence of NATO was a shock and a turn of arms against Russia in Yeltsin's eyes. The Russian authorities did not understand NATO's purpose in the context in which they had agreed to dissolve the Warsaw Pact and saw this as a betrayal and humiliation from the West. If until then foreign policy had been one with moderate pro-Western accents, it definitely changed after Yeltsin realized that Russia would not only not receive any

3 NBC News, "Putin: 'Soviet Collapse a Genuine Tragedy'," April 25, 2005, https://www.nbc news.com/ id/wbna7632057.

4 Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *URSS a murit, trăiască Rusia!* [The USSR Is Dead, Long Live Russia!], trans. Lucia Postelnicu Pop (București: Artemis Publishing House, 2010), 19.

help from the West, but would also be viewed with skepticism and concern. NATO's 1999 enlargement to the former Eastern bloc exacerbated the situation.

From Boris Yeltsin to Vladimir Putin

Against the background of acute economic and corruption problems in Russian society, the famous phenomenon of oligarchs coming to power, as through a real velvet revolution, Vladimir Putin becomes the new president of the Russian Federation. It was clear that Russia was once again on an autocratic trajectory, where the leader had few limits on power, and Vladimir Putin's tenure at the helm of the Russian Federation would prove it. However, Putin's regime managed to put an end to corruption in the country or at least reduce its intensity, which gave the president strong support from the average Russian population.

The war in Georgia

Against the backdrop of NATO's enlargement in the former Eastern bloc, the Russian Federation might be about to become neighbors in the south with a NATO member state, namely Georgia, something that has been sharply criticized by the Russian press and especially by the Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov. Although Moscow sent clear signals to Tbilisi about not joining NATO, but it also behaved more forcefully.

If in the case of the Baltic states, Russia failed to intervene clearly to prevent their membership in NATO, in the case of Georgia, Russia considered it a strategic necessity to prevent it from joining NATO. It seemed that the reason why Russia would prevent this accession were two Georgian territories, namely South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which were inhabited by two communities. The Ossetians and Abkhazians came to be supported by the Russian army, forming a real separatist force and starting a war with Georgia in which Russia also participated against Georgia.

Although internationally condemned, the Russian intervention in Georgia can be described as offensive to the Georgian state, but it was also a defensive move against NATO. Following the Georgia War, Russia created

two unofficial exclaves on the Georgian territory and managed to block NATO's enlargement in the South Caucasus.

Annexation of Crimea

Although Moscow wanted Georgia to be both an example and a signal to Kiev, Ukraine continued to aspire to NATO membership. The start of the war by pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine demonstrated to the North Atlantic alliance that Russia was not only on the defensive, but was also preparing for a strategic offensive in the territories it considered strategic. Although it had signed the Budapest Treaty recognizing and respecting Ukraine's territorial integrity, Russia violated all of these provisions in 2014 when it armed and prepared separatist movements in eastern Ukraine.

The event that would attract the attention of the entire world public opinion was the annexation of Crimea in 2014 by the Russian Federation. The annexation of the peninsula came as a response to the pro-European popular wave in Ukraine and as a result of the Euromaidan. Russia considered Crimea indispensable and strategic, especially in terms of access to the Black Sea, and NATO failed to intervene directly to change the situation, and at the end of the day, the victory turned out to be on the side of the Russian Federation.

Re-emerging Russia (from a military and economic standpoint)

Russia's re-emergence from a military and economic point of view is, of course, a cause of concern for NATO and at the same time a challenge that the alliance must face. The actions of the Kremlin in the last 10 years have proven to be extremely categorical, firm and fast, with Russia playing an increasingly offensive card. Russia's spontaneity and unpredictability is also a response to NATO enlargement.

From an economic point of view, Russia has extremely important and strategic natural resources which, if exploited efficiently, can be the basis for a strong economic growth. This is also confirmed by the steady growth of Russia's GDP until 2014, when economic sanctions against Russia had detrimental effects on the economy.

From a military point of view, the army of the Russian Federation remains the second largest army in the world and can be hard to ignore in terms of endowment, firepower, number of people, technology and of course the number of nuclear warheads. Russia remains a re-emerging power with a continuous desire to ascend to the old power of the USSR.

China, a rising superpower

Tiananmen and economic reform

If, for Russia, 1991 remains a catastrophic year from a geopolitical point of view, the People's Republic of China paid close attention the phenomena that took place at the end of the Cold War and prepared against any attempt to lose power.

Beijing had experienced a similar situation to in the Eastern bloc in 1989, but managed to cope with the student protests in Tiananmen Square, even though the world publicly condemned the Chinese state's crackdown and the huge number of casualties due to aggressive police and military intervention during the protest. The context suggested that China would share the fate of the Soviet Union. Even without the risk of losing territory, the idea of China's transition to a democratic regime was inconceivable to the Chinese Communist Party.

In 1991, China had a GDP of about $900 billion,[5] slightly less than the GDP of the Soviet Union, but about 10 times less than the GDP of the United States. The fear of an anti-communist revolution was a real one for Beijing, so the only solution was an economic reform that would ensure better conditions for the Chinese citizens and at the same time ensure the continuity of the Chinese communist regime.

The Chinese economic boom (the annexation of HK)

China in the 1990s was strongly marked by Jiang Zemin's presidency and Prime Minister Zhu Rongji's term. During their administration, China's performance set impressive records, with more than 150 million Chinese

[5] https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/compare-countries/, last accessed August 2021.

peasants being lifted out of poverty and the state's GDP growing steadily over 10%. In 2001, the People's Republic of China officially became a member of the World Trade Organization and managed to maintain its spectacular economic growth.

The Chinese economic boom has also had a negative effect on the environment in China, and pollution remains a major problem in this country. The Chinese economy also managed to have very high economic growth rates in the first decade of the third millennium, which has kept China for more than 21 years as the world's second largest economic power after the United States. At the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in November 2012, the Chinese leadership was taken over by Xi Jinping as president and Li Keqiang as prime minister, both announcing an ambitious and reformist agenda.

Another event that paved the way for the Chinese economy was the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997. The re-entry of Hong Kong into the Chinese sphere of influence provided an extremely important trade and economic node to the country and played a defining role in China's economic rise.

The new Silk Road

An infrastructure represented by thousands of kilometers of roads or train tracks between Asia and Europe, ports and airports, gas pipelines and logistics centers has become the Chinese plan for the reconstruction of a New Silk Road. China wants to invest billions of dollars in new infrastructure that will connect Asian, African and European countries. The bold project has been strongly promoted by Chinese leader Xi Jinping since 2013, and now we can say that its realization is becoming more and more tangible.

This gigantic project is an expression of China's geopolitical and economic ambitions, which could surpass the United States at the top of the largest economic powers. China's recent infusions of capital into Africa, but even into Western Balkan countries, suggest Beijing's economic obsession with building a strong global economic artery.

China on the offensive

China is not only in a strong economic offensive against the West, but also in a strong race for armament and development of the armed forces, being the third largest military force in the world. Russia's return as a global military power after 2000 has led to a rapprochement between Beijing and Moscow in the face of genuine opposition to NATO, which may be a real concern for the North Atlantic Alliance.

China is also becoming expansionist, with considerable claims in both the South China Sea and the East China Sea, not to mention the fact that China considers Taiwan as part of its national territory. Rising tensions between Taiwan and China are a real international problem, and a decisive victory for China in terms of claims from neighboring seas or Taiwan would give China a chance to expand trade shipping lines, leading to a new Chinese economic boom that would put China not far from the United States. Interesting prospects are also opening up for the future of Afghanistan, where almost all NATO forces have withdrawn, and against this background, China would like to be directly involved in the reorganization of the Afghan state, thus increasing its influence in Central and Western Asia. Moreover, the People's Republic of China's considerable nuclear arsenal should not be ignored, as this country can mobilize the largest number of soldiers in the world in the event of an armed conflict.

A military-economic comparison

Economic

From an economic point of view, the US still remains the dominant economic power, but it is not certain whether Washington will succeed in winning the economic competition with China's continuous economic growth.

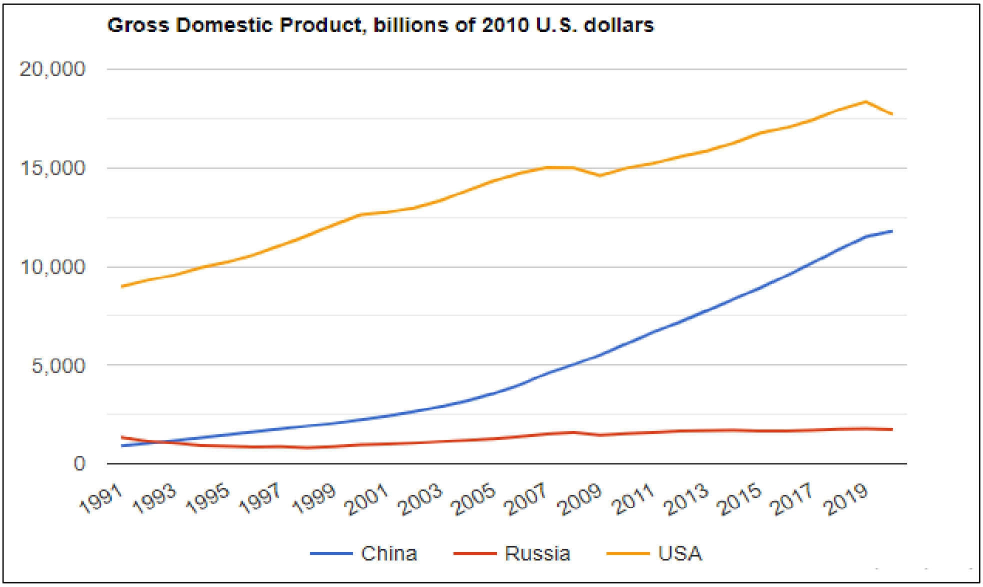


Fig. 1. Data organized and collected from https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/

The graph above represents the evolution of the GDP of China, the United States and Russia from 1991 to 2020. Even if the pandemic year 2020 represented a period of economic recession for the United States, the economy declining even more than during the 2008 crisis, China managed to register a slight economic growth in 2020, not being as affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Certainly, compared to 1991, the economic gap between the United States and China has clearly narrowed, but remains quite considerable. Even a combination of the Chinese and Russian economies would not be able to surpass the American economy, much less the collective economy of all 30 NATO member states where we find top economies such as France, Germany, Canada or Italy.

For the time being, China's economic rise is a matter of concern for NATO and something that should be treated as a threat from the perspective of the influence that the People's Republic of China is gaining worldwide.

Military

From a military point of view, NATO has the largest number of financial, material and human resources directed in the field of defense.

Several NATO countries direct 2% or more of GDP to defense, and this makes the North Atlantic Alliance the world's largest military power.

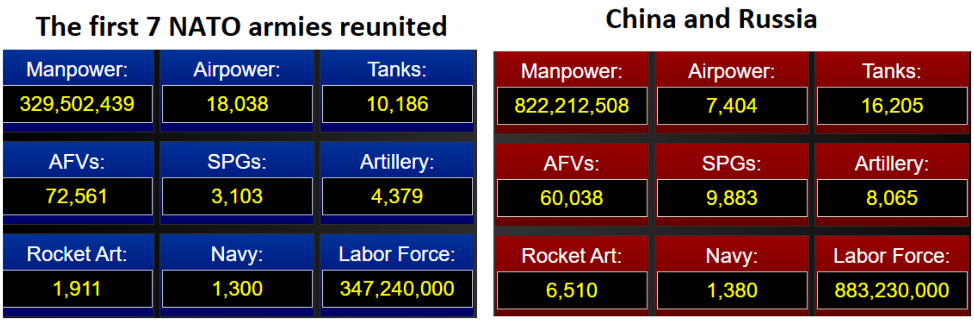


Fig. 2. Data organized and collected from https://www.globalfirepower.com/

Due to the large volume of data required for a comparison that includes all NATO Member States, only the military availability of the seven largest economic powers in NATO is included in the blue part of the above chart, namely: United States, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Turkey, Canada and Italy. Certainly, the other 23 member states of the alliance also have a special importance in the balance of power between NATO and the Russian Federation and China.

In line with the above chart, we note that there is an important difference in labor force between NATO and China and Russia, but this difference decreases significantly taking into account the working population of the other 23 NATO member states. There is the superiority of China and Russia in artillery pieces, exceeding the number of NATO artillery pieces by almost two times, but this difference is not a major concern because most Russian artillery pieces are from the time of the Cold War. The same can be said of the higher number of tanks, many dating back to the 1970s and 1980s, while the tanks of NATO forces belong to a superior technological generation.

In terms of the number of naval forces, things seem to suggest an apparent equality between the two blocs, although the US has the largest number of aircraft carriers in the world, and together, NATO states have more than half the number of aircraft carriers globally.

NATO air forces boast the largest number of aircraft, being twice as numerous as the combined air forces of China and Russia. NATO's air superiority is mainly due to the continued development of the US Air Force and the development of high-performance aircraft such as the F-35 Lightning II. Air superiority is a crucial advantage for NATO, and aviation has proven to be extremely important in recent history.

Comparable numbers of armored vehicles also exist between the top 7 NATO armies and the Russian-Chinese forces, however the North Atlantic Alliance has developed an important series of modern armored vehicles. At the same time, in terms of nuclear warheads, things are balanced. Three NATO states have nuclear weapons, namely the USA, France and Great Britain, while on the other hand, both Russia and China have nuclear weapons. However, the most important nuclear powers are the US and Russia, which have more than 5,000 nuclear warheads each.

Conclusions

The international context is constantly changing, and this can be seen very easily, with changes in power relations globally becoming much more frequent. Personally, I think it is very likely that the world will return to a bipolar global status quo, but an American-Chinese bipolarity, this time.

The People's Republic of China is proving to be an extremely ambitious international player, ready to get what it wants, playing strategically, but also in the long run. China's constant armament, continued military research, international economic boom, the Chinese capital's entry into the most unexpected places on the planet, and the modern reconstruction of what was the Silk Road suggest that Beijing has big plans for the future, plans for true global domination. Famous political scientist, author and Director of the Center on Chinese Strategy at the Hudson Institute in Washington, Michael Pillsbury, mentioned in his book, *The 100-Year Marathon*, that the People's Republic of China will become the world's largest power by 2050, and competing with the United States is not just a matter of pride: "The sheer truth and the hard thing is that, for China's

leaders, America is a rival in a global struggle, one they intend to win."[6] Thus, through a Chinese world order, NATO will find it difficult to cope with an all-powerful China and its future allies.

The Russian Federation is also a re-emerging state, seeking to regain, at least in part if not in full, the power and influence of the former Soviet Union. Economically, Russia has the resources to compete with the economies of other NATO member states, but never the ability to compete with the US economy. From a military point of view, it should not be neglected that Russia and the United States are together the world's largest nuclear powers, and the ratio of nuclear warheads between them is approximately equal. We can say that the Russian revenge is also due to the foreign policy errors of the West in the 1990s, but also a reaction to the NATO enlargement in former strategic areas for the Russian Federation. Russia's military action in Georgia or Ukraine is reprehensible, but at the same time, these are defensive measures for Moscow.

Although for the time being, NATO unifies a large number of militarily strong states and proves to be the first in this race with the Russian-Chinese side, it is not unlikely that in the coming decades this relation of power will undergo dramatic changes in favor of the latter. The new internal political context in the Member States of NATO suggests that the alliance is not abandoning its open door policy and that the integration of other European states into the organization and the close partnerships with Japan and South Korea remain vital.

Finally, the future of NATO and the future balance of power between the alliance and Russia and China is conditioned both by the economic evolution of the states and by their ability to develop and maintain modern military forces. Of course, NATO is the party that has the advantage now, but the alliance must find out as soon as possible how it will be able to maintain its long-term advantage and superiority.

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6 Michael Pillsbury, *Maratonul de o sută de ani. Strategia secretă a Chinei de a înlocui SUA ca superputere globală* [The 100-Year Marathon. China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower], trans. Vasile Bontaș (București: Niculescu Publishing House, 2020), 277.

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Regionalization and the New Politics of Political Globalization

CRISTIAN BORDEI

In this paper I am going to analyze the possible regained momentum of globalization after Joe Biden' win in the recent US elections but also the new "political" face of the current forces of globalization, after China's "panda diplomacy" meltdown under Xi's iron grip and the potential rise of regionalization as a softer version of globalization.

The paper will have the following parts:

1. The origin of globalization and a short historical perspective
2. The post-pandemic perspective
3. The big global political fracture
4. My conclusions

The origin of globalization and a short historical perspective

The origin of the globalization concept can be traced back to 1817 when David Ricardo published his theory of "comparative advantage," according to which if one country can produce specific goods (or services) at a lower cost than other countries, it will produce more and (under free trade) export more – with a resulting increase in economic welfare.

Ricardo was a fierce believer in free trade, as opposed to the protectionist tariffs then used by most countries around the world. He argued that free trade and industrial specialization could improve everyone's wealth because countries would no longer be forced to uneconomically produce goods they could get from elsewhere.

This turned actually to be a paradigmatic turning point from the narrow-minded mercantilism of that era when countries used to limit imports through tariffs and taxes, under the assumption that giving other

countries money was a bad thing. And the effects of this shift in economic thinking were notable and long-lasting:

- the 19th century brought an exponential boom in global trade and the inflation-adjusted value of global exports rose thirtyfold from 1800 to 1900, according to World Bank data.
- in the first half of the 20th century, export growth was slowed by two world wars, a great depression and a rise in nationalism – but since 1950, exports have grown thirtyfold again, from a much higher baseline.
- while consumerism increased demand, containerization improved logistics and by the early 1990s, sociologists such as Martin Albrow were using the term "globalization."[1]
- Albrow, now a fellow of British Academy of Social Sciences, told CGTN Europe in an interview taken on June 4, 2020 that "he remains convinced of the benefits of globalization," which he says "has contributed to a more open world, a world which is richer in terms of experience and in products and in standard of living." For Albrow, "the world does become richer through globalization and Europe has benefited enormously from that."[2]

The post-pandemic perspective

Contending views over the future of the globalization

In a very interesting paper published on October 28, 2020, Chinese scholars Zhaohui Wang and Zhiqiang Sun have summarized and described three contending views on post-pandemic future of economic globalization:[3] the optimists, the pessimists and the centrists.

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[1] Elizabeth Mearns and Gary Parkinson, "With a Pandemic, Populism and Protectionism, Have We Passed Peak Globalization?," *CGTN*, June 4, 2020, https://newseu.cgtn.com/news/2020-05-28/With-a-pandemic-populism-and-protectionism-has-globalization-peaked—QOQMPg3ABO/index.html.

[2] Mearns and Parkinson, "Have We Passed Peak Globalization?."

[3] Zhaohui Wang and Zhiqiang Sun, "From Globalization to Regionalization: The United States, China, and the Post-Covid-19 World Economic Order," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 26 (2021): 69-87, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-020-09706-3.

Optimists:

- they think that, despite a certain degree of disruption to the international economic order, globalization it is expected to return to the pre-crisis trajectory soon after the pandemic is contained;
- they argue that no prior shocks, including epidemics such as the 2002–2004 SARS, the 1968 H3N2 pandemic (Hong Kong flu), the 1958 H2N2 pandemic (Asian flu), and the 1918 H1N1 pandemic (Spanish flu) have done structural damage to the affected economies and fundamentally changed the nature of international economic order;
- they also consider that statistics show that economic recovery from prior pandemics was quick (i.e., V-shaped), and by consequence economic recovery from Covid-19 will be more similar than different this time;
- their conclusion is that Covid-19 will not kill globalization but reveal that no one can go it alone. And the case of the Covid-19 pandemic reveals that international cooperation is critical for effective mass testing and treatment for the virus, and then countries are expected to work together to improve production and distribution.

Pessimists:

- they expect localization instead of globalization;
- they have little hope of effective international cooperation under the current structure (underlying anarchy) of global governance and believe that Covid-19 will create significant and sustaining structural damage to the world economy;
- they argue that, according to a recent poll from Reuters,[4] nearly half of the economists expect a U-shaped recovery, more than any other option such as V-shaped or L-shaped[5] and they view the Covid-19 crisis as a systemic and long-lasting crisis that is even more severe

[4] Shrutee Sarkar, "U.S. Economy Likely Set for U-shaped Recovery after Deep Rut: Reuters Poll," *Reuters*, April 21, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-economy-poll/u-s-economy-likely-set-for-u-shaped-recovery-after-deep-rut-reuters-poll-idUSKCN2231V6.

[5] Zhi Wang, Shang-Jin Wei, Xinding Yu, and Kunfu Zhu, "Measures of Participation in Global Value Chains and Global Business Cycles," National Bureau of Economic Research working paper no. 23222, March 2017, https://doi.org/10.3386/w23222, https://www.nber.org/papers/w23222.

than the 2008 global financial crisis and, to a great extent, comparable to the Great Depression;

- therefore, they would expect a wave of economic nationalism and localization to replace globalization. While both inter-regional and intra-regional production and trade will decrease, the share of domestic economic activities will rise.

Centrists:

- they stand somewhere in the middle and think that the world economy will recover anyway, but not as quickly as optimists anticipate and not as hard-hit as pessimists foresee;
- they use terms like "limited globalization,"[6] and "slowbalization" (a term coined in 2015 by a Dutch trend-watcher, Adjiedj Bakas);
- according to them, the new normal of economic globalization implies continued integration of the global economy but albeit at a significantly slower pace while "slowbalization" will lead to deeper links within regional blocs;
- they believe Covid-19 has exposed the dangers of relying on any one country for needed inputs, it is important to regionalize supply chains and to diversify trading partners and therefore globalization will slow down and other forms of economic integration such as regionalization will be promoted.

A better view from a farther vantage point

While taking into account these three categories of views over the future of globalization in the post-pandemic world and giving them the due merits, however, for a more thorough analysis, the authors propose to employ a wider historical perspective as well. Specifically, they expand the time frame taken into consideration to a range of 20 years that will permit the examination of the continuities and changes in the cycle of globalization and deglobalization in the new millennium.

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[6] Yuan Jiang, "The Age of Limited Globalization Is Upon Us," *The Diplomat*, October 16, 2020, https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/the-age-of-limited-globalization-is-upon-us/.

This is done with the purpose of detecting particular moments, events, and critical junctures throughout the considered period, before and after the 2008 global financial crisis that might shed light on possible patterns for the future, considering also the particular impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the historical process.

First, the authors start from considering America and China as the two of the most important economies of the world and their economic relationship critically important for globalization in the twenty-first century. By consequence, they examine how economic globalization evolves along with this bilateral economic relationship and reach a first key finding.

They have combined the analysis of the evolution of China's overall trade surplus and bilateral surplus with the US between 2000–2018, with the analysis of the evolution of the global trade percentage in GDP, China and US over the same period, adding the study of the evolution of China's foreign reserves and holdings of US securities and of China's monthly export growth rate.

Their resulting key finding after this process was that economic globalization has been in transition since the 2008 financial crisis. This was a turning point and some fundamental changes in the nature of globalization have taken place since then, giving way to the aforementioned slowbalization and even some globalization reversing trends. A paramount but not exclusive factor in explaining this change is the evolving US–China economic relationship, from symbiotic towards increasingly competitive.

For example, Figures 1 and 2 below show the evolution of the trade percentage in GDP of the world, China and US in the decades before and after the 2008 financial crisis. We see that after its accession to the WTO membership in 2001, China developed its complementary economic relationship with the US and increasingly integrated into the world economy and the US–China economic relationship was one of the most important engines of economic globalization before 2008.

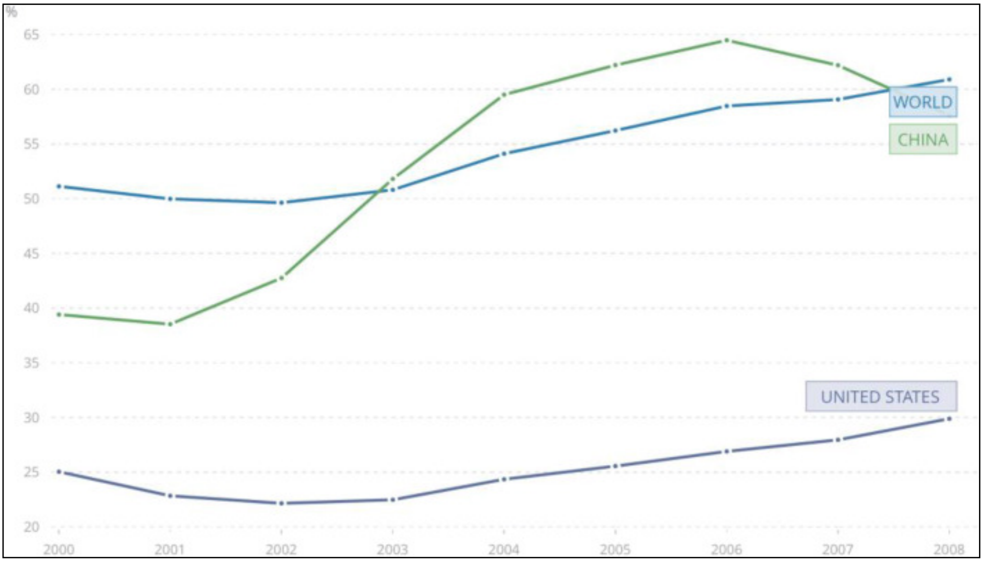


Fig. 1. Trade as percentage of GDP: World, the US, and China, 2000-2008.
Source: World Bank Data.

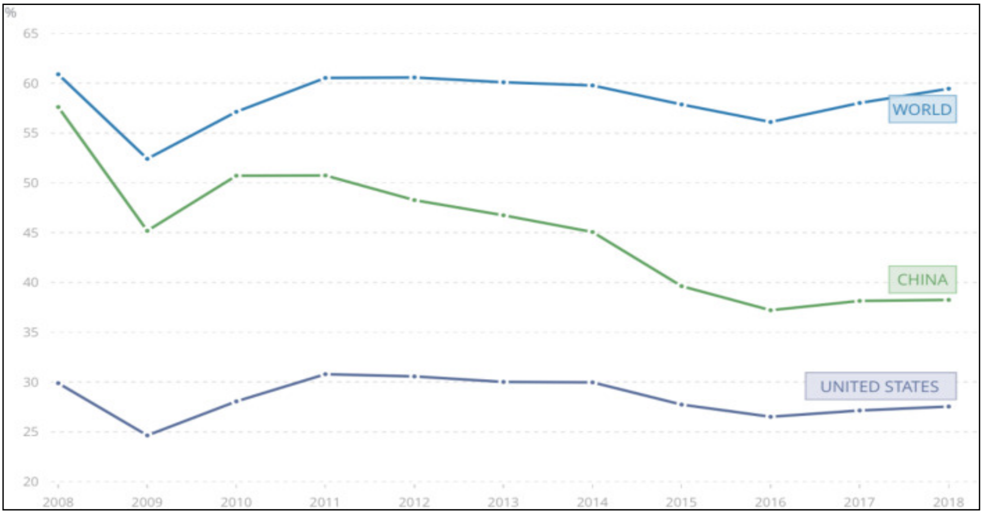


Fig. 2. Trade as % of GDP: World, the US, and China, 2008–2018.
Source: World Bank Data.

But international trade was severely hit by the 2008 global financial crisis and after it recovered, the world trade as a percentage of world GDP did not continue to grow after 2011. From 2011 to 2018, China's trade-to-GDP ratio experienced a significant decline, from more than 50% down to

less than 40%, compared to America's slow and slight counterpart, with no more than 5% decrease. The explanation is China's policy shift after the 2008 shock which revealed the weakness of the cheap exports economic model. Post-2008 China has moved to a new economic model based on internal consumption and high technology, high added value export. But, by doing so, it switched from a symbiotic economic relationship with the US to an increasing competition with the US and the most developed countries.

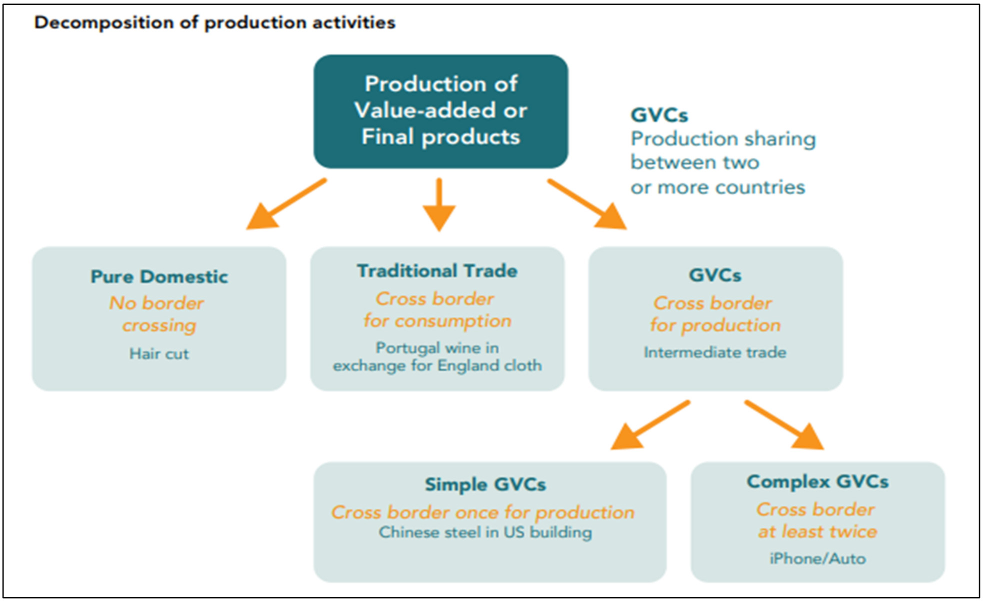


Fig. 3. Decomposition of production activities

As a second step the authors follow the methodology of Wang et al. to divide production activities into four types:[7]

- the first type, purely domestic or localized, is added value produced and the final product consumed at home without involving international trade.
- the second type, traditional international trade, is an added value produced at home and final product exported for international consumption, i.e., China's cloth in exchange for America's soybeans.

[7] Wang, Wei, Yu, and Zhu, "Measures of Participation in Global Value Chains."

- the third is a simple type of global value chain (GVC) when the intermediate product crosses border once for foreign production, i.e., China's steel produced for America's building.
- the fourth is a complex type of GVC if the intermediate product crosses borders at least twice to produce final export for other countries, i.e., iPhones or German cars manufacturing lines[8].

In Fig. 4 below it is shown how the four types of production activities evolved from 1995 to 2017 and there are a few noteworthy patterns:

- the relative share of production activities decreased before 2008, while the shares of traditional, simple, and complex GVCs generally increased.

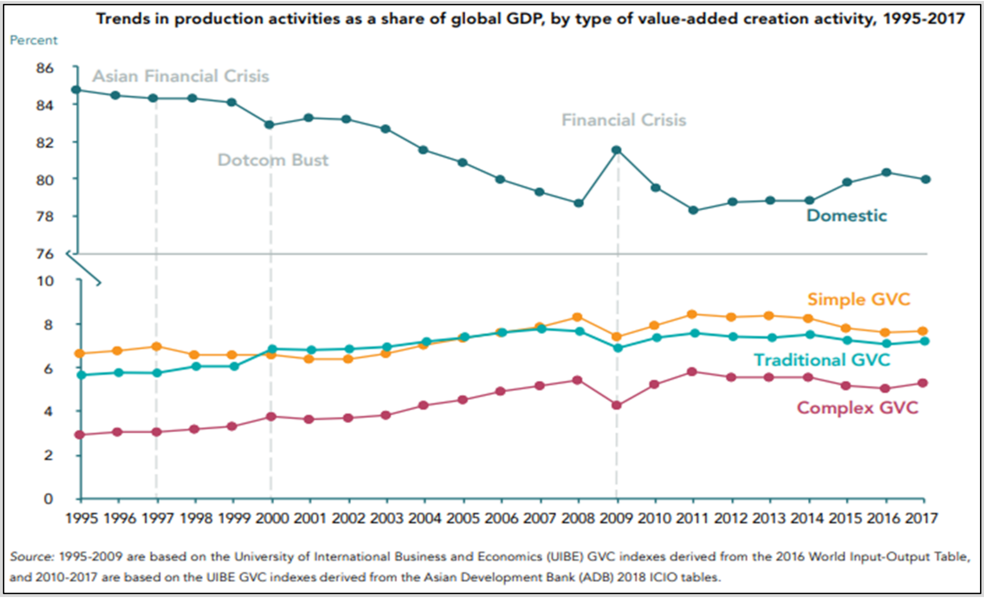


Fig. 4. Four types of production activities as a share of global GDP, 1995-2017. Source: Xin Li, Bo Meng, and Zhi Wang, "Recent Patterns of Global Production and GVC Participation," World Bank and World Trade Organization, *Global Value Chain Development Report 2019*, Washington, D.C., 12.

[8] World Bank Group, "Global Value Chain Development Report 2019: Technological Innovation, Supply Chain Trade, and Workers in a Globalized World," April 15, 2019, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/384161555079173489/Global-Value-Chain-Development-Report-2019-Technological-Innovation-Supply-Chain-Trade-and-Workers-in-a-Globalized-World.

- after a sharp decline in international trade in 2009, all three GVC activities took two years to return to the pre-crisis level, which demonstrates the U-shaped recovery of the world economy.
- the relative importance of domestic production activities increased after 2011, while traditional, simple, and complex GVCs generally decreased.
- according to the authors, the patterns found show that economic globalization was, to a larger extent, driven by complex GVC activities, and the steepest decline of complex GVC activities after 2011 demonstrate their assumption that globalization slowed down after the 2008 financial crisis.

The analysis is further refined using the network analysis, which highlights some structural characteristics of the international production networks:

- as shown in the upper part of Fig. 5, the three hubs of traditional trade networks are Germany, China, and the US, which have important linkages with each other.
- in 2017, as shown on the right side of Fig. 5, for both simple and complex GVC trade networks, there are no longer any important direct linkages between any two hubs.
- the middle-right of Fig. 5 shows that simple GVC activities are to a great extent concentrated within each of the three regions, except for the US and Germany's indirect link through the Netherlands.
- in 2017 complex GVC activities are more concentrated among regional trading partners (see the right bottom of Fig. 5.[9]

Therefore, a second key finding is that globalization is in retreat while localization and regionalization are filling the vacuum.

[9] World Bank Group, "Global Value Chain Development Report 2019."

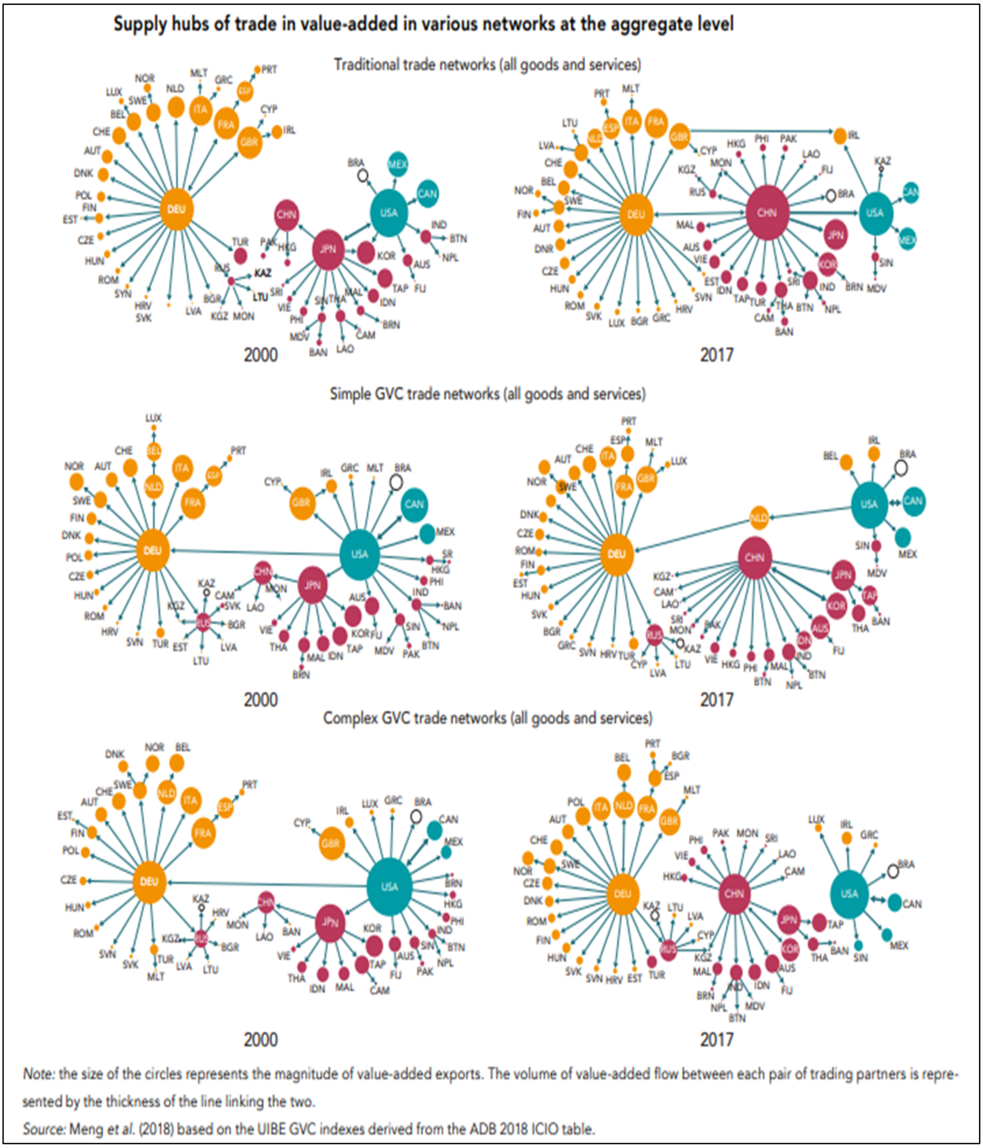


Fig. 5. Supply hubs of three GVC activities trade networks in 2017.
Source: Xin Li, Bo Meng, and Zhi Wang,
"Recent Patterns of Global Production and GVC Participation", 27.

To summarize, the results of this study, as formulated by the authors, are "that while economic globalization continues to slow down, the relative importance of domestic and regional production activities has been on the rise in the last decade. In a nutshell, US–China competition and Covid-19

will not put an end to economic globalization, rather, they will promote other forms of production activities such as regionalization and localization"[10]

The big global political fracture

China's techno-authoritarianism on display

According to Maya Wang, a China Senior Researcher, "China is globally showcasing, from Ecuador to Kyrgyzstan, an ecosystem of Chinese-based technologies which undergirds a form of twenty-first-century authoritarianism that marries social control and efficiency."[11]

While everybody is talking about the mass surveillance programs used in the Xinjiang province, the Chinese authorities actually use technology in subtle ways to control the population all over the country.

"For example, the central bank is prepared to adopt the digital currency, which will allow Beijing to surveil and control people's financial transactions and the so-called safe cities are built integrating data from surveillance systems to predict and prevent fires and natural disasters but also political dissent."[12]

The Chinese government is using technology and the vast surveillance power enabled by it to the core of a new form of government—one intended to meet the material needs of its vast population while conditioning a loyal bureaucracy and bypassing competitive elections, a free press, and an independent judiciary.[13] Basically, this is a project of a state which is trying to combine ideology and authoritarianism with practical efficiency.

The poverty elimination signature campaign of President Xi is an ideal showcase of the way in which such a state is supposed to function. The campaign does not only task cadres with collecting detailed personal information on poor people, including their income, disabilities, and bank

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[10] Wang, Wei, Yu, and Zhu, "Measures of Participation in Global Value Chains."

[11] Maya Wang, "China's Techno-Authoritarianism Has Gone Global," *Human Rights Watch*, April 8, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/08/chinas-techno-authoritarianism-has-gone-global.

[12] Wang, "China's Techno-Authoritarianism."

[13] Wang, "China's Techno-Authoritarianism."

account numbers, and the reasons for their poverty, but also collects the cadres' GPS locations to ensure that they are diligently carrying out their responsibilities.

The US situation

Many politicians (Joe Biden included), scholars, pundits and big swathes of population have presented the doctrine and Presidency of Donald Trump as an aberration from which the United States will quickly recover.[14] But eventually many of them came to the conclusion that a return to the pre-Trump status quo is not possible. The world—and the United States-have changed far too much.

Currently, the U.S. foreign policy specialists fall into two broad camps:[15]

- one that believes in the continued U.S. global leadership, arguing that the world requires leadership and that leader can be only the US, while there is no reliable alternative on the horizon. They favor a unilateral brand of leadership, generally approve of armed interventions and argue for an order defined by a coalition of democracies on the one hand, in opposition to authoritarian governments on the other. Joe Biden has sometimes given signs that is an adept of this view.
- the other believes that the United States should define a narrower set of interests and favor a more limited global role for the United States, one that could be rather defined as the first among equals in a multilateral community. They view the U.S. track record of the past 20 years as a telling evidence of what happens when a state defines its national interests too broadly and gets drawn into a series of wars and military interventions without a clear national interest at stake

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[14] Farouk J. Contractor, "The World Economy Will Need *Even More* Globalization in the Post-pandemic 2021 Decade," *Journal of International Business Studies* (2021), https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-020-00394-y.

[15] Jessica T. Matthews, "Present at the Re-creation? U.S. Foreign Policy Must Be Remade, Not Restored," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-02-16/present-re-creation.

- some specialists from this second camp argue for a major retrenchment and giving up on promoting democracy, advancing human rights and helping poorer nations develop and others advocate a much more modest correction, especially pulling back from the Middle East.[16]

Obviously, the future of globalization will be influenced both by the way in which Chinese techno-authoritarianism will function and spread (or not) across the world and by the prevailing view over the US foreign policy in the White House and Congress.

For the moment, the presidency of Joe Biden can be viewed as the tipping point towards a regained momentum of multilateralism and globalization. Xi's China looks rock solid and poised towards spreading its model in many parts of the world but there are many experts pointing to the inner weaknesses of the regime, very well hidden until now. An example is Joseph Solis-Mullen' paper "China won't be taking over the world"[17] in which the author argues that "China would likely face the threat of serious collapse and fragmentation by the late 2030s."

Conclusions

It is very difficult to predict the form globalization will take in the post-pandemic world, especially while a major event like the COVID-19 pandemic is still unfolding. The conjugated effects of the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic seem to have turned the tide toward localization and regionalization but yet globalization still has enough thrust fueled by the complexity of global supply chains and the very difficult task to reconfigure many of them, and by the simple fact that it is impossible, in my opinion, to return to sovereign economic self-sufficiency; moreover, the pandemic has actually *facilitated* globalization by encouraging people to find new ways to stay in touch during the lockdowns and restrictions and expand the use of technologies facilitating remote work and collaboration in all areas of life.

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[16] Matthews, "Present at the Re-Creation?."

[17] Joseph Solis-Mullen, "China Won't Be Taking Over the World," Mises Wire, August 9, 2021, https://mises.org/wire/china-wont-be-taking-over-world.

I agree that the evolution of the bilateral relation between US and China will remain the major factor to shape what globalization will look like in the future; while both China and the US (in the Biden era) are promoters of multilateralism, the political meaning and purpose of multilateralism for the two major actors are fairly opposite

Illiberalism versus liberal democracy will remain a global political line of fracture as this will not mean not only nationalism versus globalism but also techno-authoritarianism versus democratically controlled surveillance technology and personal data gathering. While the EU represents the most successful example of regionalization, for some geographic areas, because of unsolved historical issues, regionalization will remain a very thorny business (i.e. Pakistan – India – China, etc.). Most likely, illiberal and liberal groups of countries will naturally aggregate in stronger or looser blocs of a softer cold-war type, but these will overlap in various areas with inter-connected regional blocs.

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The Impact of Monetary Policy and Easing Financial Conditions on Contemporary Markets and Politics

MIHAI-EMILIAN IVANOV

Introduction

"Inflation, inflation, inflation" – this is the word on everyone's lips nowadays, it is trending on social media, especially on Twitter, and it concerns people from the poorest to the richest. But what exactly is inflation and what lies behind its rise in the last two quarters of 2021, especially in the United States? To find out, we need to go back to the first two quarters of 2020 and examine the macroeconomic context of the world at that time, the policy responses of governments and central banks worldwide and establish whether or not this inflationary pressure we are seeing today has anything to do with monetary and fiscal policy.

When asking people on their opinion on the financial markets and their impact on politics and policies, one is met with a wide range of answers. However, when most people think of this relationship as a complex and hard to understand relationship, the truth behind the matter is fairly simple: Since the beginning of time, money made politics and politics made money. The markets react to what politicians say and policymakers decide and then the markets indicate whether or not those words/policies are efficient or not. One should never assume that "markets" means only the American stock indices like the Dow Jones, the S&P 500 or the NASDAQ, or the European ones. The market is everyone and everything, the market, simply put, is but the consensus of every buyer and seller on the price of goods and services around the globe. We all are buyers and sellers, we all shop for groceries and sell our time, knowledge, skills and aptitudes in order to produce one simple, yet extremely important thing: money.

Money: a store of value, unit of account and medium of exchange, these characteristics have never changed, what has changed, however, is what exactly we, as a society consider "money." Throughout history, we have used various precious metals in place of money, such as gold (AU) and silver (AG), great civilizations like the Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians, the Persians and the Chinese have all used gold and silver, with the Chinese being the first to use paper money backed by gold. This trend continued well into our era. The British pound sterling, at the height of the British Empire, was the world's reserve currency and all major transactions were settled in pounds, not to mention that it was all backed by the shiny yellow metal. The United States dollar overthrew the pound as reserve currency due to the dissolution of the British Empire and the emergence of the United States as world hegemon with its seemingly-invincible armies and its huge and extremely developed economy. It was not until 1971 when US President Richard Nixon decided to pull the United States out of the Bretton Woods Accord that the complete split between the US dollar and gold took place. Now gold and silver are commodities like any other and the US dollar became the standard measure for all other currencies. This is where the aim of the present paper takes shape. Are politicians and policymakers responsible for inflation, what are the repercussions of these actions on the transatlantic relationship and how are the economies of the two polities (the US and the EU) going to be affected by the constant devaluation of their currencies?



Fig. 1. The decline of the silver Antoninianus during the 3rd Century AD sparked mutinies among the Imperial Legions, many of them proclaiming as Emperor the general (legatus) who managed to pay them in higher quality coins.
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1b/Decline_of_the_antoninianus.jpg

The present chapter aims to briefly explain inflation and its impact on the world, as well as whether the present inflationary pressures are due to the obstacles that the reopening of the global economy faces or they are

driven by institutional policies and what consequences this might have on the relationship between the United States and the European Union. The paper has three sections, the first one is where I analyze the influence of inflation on states and empires from the past and present, how the devaluation of a currency and how its subsequent loss of purchasing power can lead to ruin or fundamental changes in a society's politics. In this section I also analyze the present differences between the United States dollar and the euro. The second section is where I look at central banks, detail a little on the goals and tools of the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank when it comes to monetary policy and look into the impact of said monetary policy on the economies and currencies of the two polities. The third sections is the one concluding the entire paper with a brief look at the potential changes to the Euro-Atlantic relationship that inflation and the policies of the two central banks might bring.

Inflation, trade and the Euro-Atlantic differences

Inflation, the constant decrease of purchasing power of a currency over time, is not a new phenomenon and its effects can be widely seen by any student of history to be greatly devastating to any civilization. It is a great burden to bear and as German economist Karl Otto Poehl, the former President of the Bundesbank put it: "Inflation is like toothpaste. Once it's out, you can hardly get it back in again. So the best thing is not to squeeze too hard on the tube."[1] The Roman Empire's silver *Antoninianvs* lost almost its entire silver value during the 3rd century AD, which also coincided with the greatest crisis faced by the Roman World since the Civil War between Octavian and Marc Anthony.

The story of Habsburg Spain's Empire teaches the same lesson. With a large influx of gold and silver (i.e. increase in the money supply) from the newly conquered Americas, Spain discovered that the more gold and silver it brought from America, the Real could buy less and less. The markets discovered this and figured that if the Crown had such excessive reserves, then

[1] Deutsche Bundesbank, "Quotes by Dr. Karl Otto Pöhl," n. d., https://www.bundesbank.de/resource/blob/666662/cebdc3a25107a0d45060fdb36270abb4/mL/quotes-by-karl-otto-poehl-data.pdf, accessed on August 9, 2021.

it can afford to pay more and more and the upward spiral in inflation already got out of control and it heralded the fall of the Spanish Empire from its position as world hegemon and the Real from its status as reserve currency.

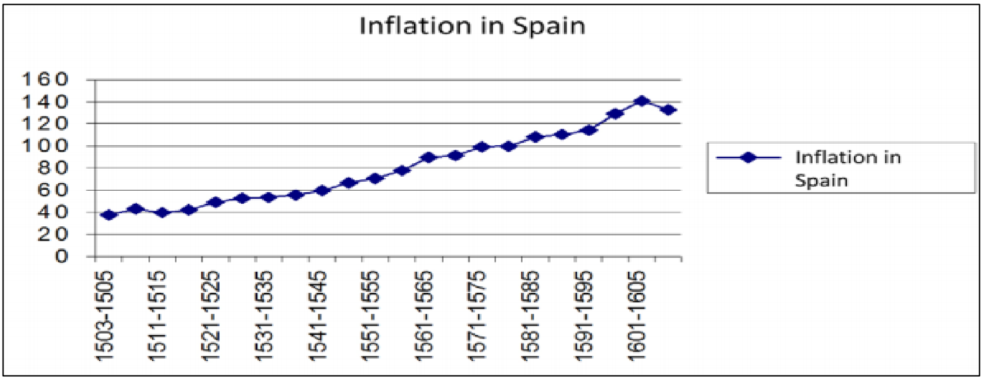


Fig. 2. Spain's 16th century should serve as a lesson and a warning for us that an even expansive money supply will inevitably lead to high inflation.
Source: https://spanishinflation.weebly.com/index.html

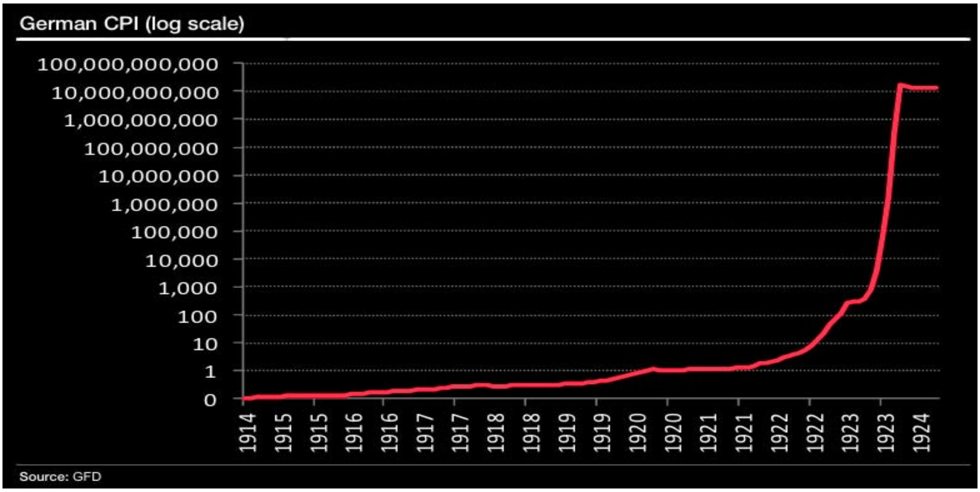


Fig. 3. Evolution of Germany's Inflation or CPI (Consumer Price Index).
Source: https://www.businessinsider.com/weimar-germany-hyperinflation-explained-2013-9

It is extremely important not to forget the example of the Republic of Weimar and how increasing the money supply in order to settle the international obligations of Germany after the First World War resulted in a hyperinflation that brought the collapse of Germany's first democratic form

of government and ushered in the Nazi regime which dominated Germany for more than a decade.

The slow and continuous loss of purchasing power of a currency (i.e., inflation), as we have seen, can have calamitous effects on a nation and the political climate of the region to which that nation belongs. Rome's 3rd century crisis crippled the Empire and in its aftermath a new order was imposed, Spain's expansion of the monetary supply devastated its ability to project power and enabled other colonial powers like France, the Netherlands and Britain to exploit this and engage in colonial expansion at Spain's expense. Germany's or the Weimar Republic's hyperinflation, born out of the Government's expansion of monetary supply in order to pay the war reparations owed by the previous Imperial Government led to the total dismemberment of Germany's first democratic regime, a severe drawdown in the citizens' standard of living and the subsequent struggle for power in Germany between the Communists and the Nazis with the latter being ultimately triumphant.

History often rhymes more than it repeats itself and, going forward in the second half of the 20th and the first decades of the 21st, we see the United States dollar (USD) suffering from the same inflationary pressures as all other currencies had. However, the root causes of that are different and this time it has to do with the monetary and fiscal policies of the central banks and governments.



Fig. 4. This chart represents the US Dollar Index and its devaluation over time from 1985 to 2021. Source: TradingView.com



Fig. 5. The evolution of the price of GOLD (in USD) since 1971 to 2021.
Source: TradingView.com

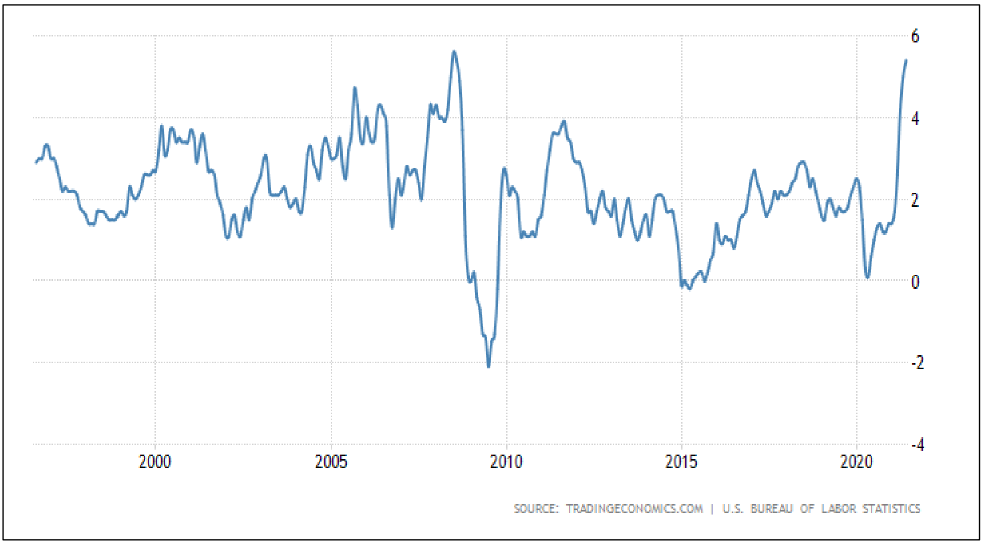


Fig. 6. US Inflation Rate YoY (2000-2021).
Source: tradingeconomics.com

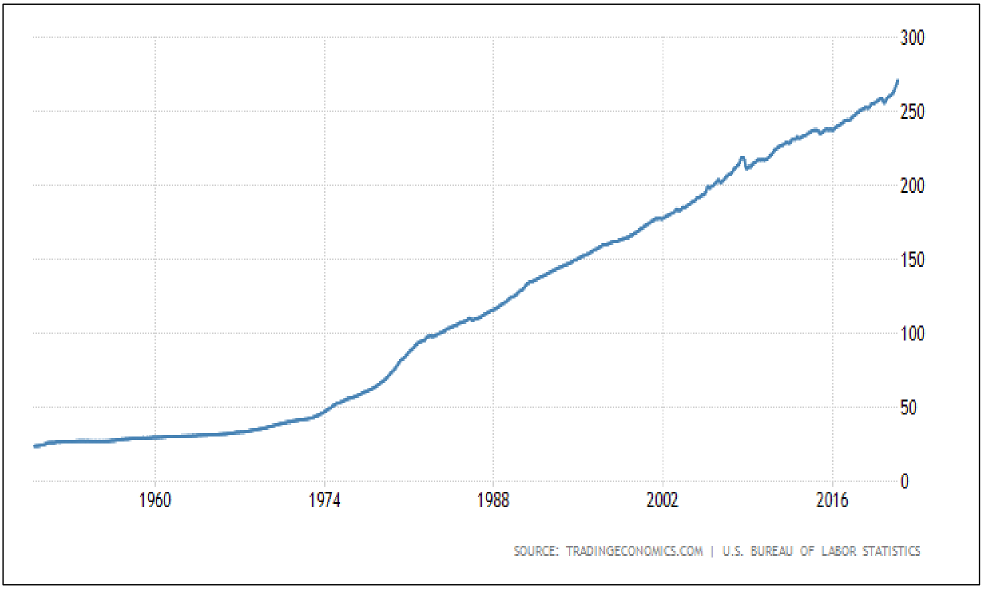


Fig. 7. US Consumer Price Index (1960-2021).
Source: tradingeconomics.com

All these charts point towards the fact that the purchasing power of the average US citizen is dwindling over time. The price of gold in itself is not the best metric and that is why I've chosen to showcase the evolution of the CPI. The Consumer Price Index measures the change in prices that consumers pay for a basket of goods and services.[2] Since US President Nixon separated the US dollar from the Gold Standard (1971), we have seen a sharp increase in the CPI index, the upward trend is sharper and the rate of change is faster and more aggressive, suggesting that since 1974 Americans had to pay more and more for the standard basket of goods and services, while at the same time, the level of disposable personal income has also increased, suggesting that the living standard of the average American has not increased substantially.

[2] Jason Fernando, "Consumer Price Index (CPI)," Investopedia, July 13, 2021, https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/consumerpriceindex.asp.

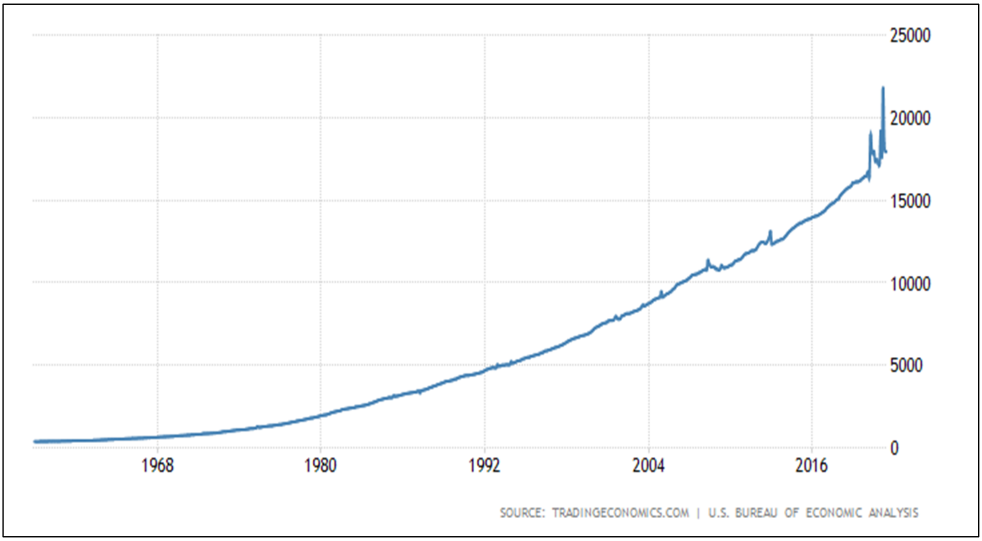


Fig. 8. US Disposable Personal Income

Given that this paper is concerned with the impact of these economic changes in society on the political relationship between the EU and the US, we ought to take a look at the situation in the European Union and how it contrasts with that in the United States. The Euro Area does not confront itself at present with the high inflationary pressures that we are seeing now in the United States.

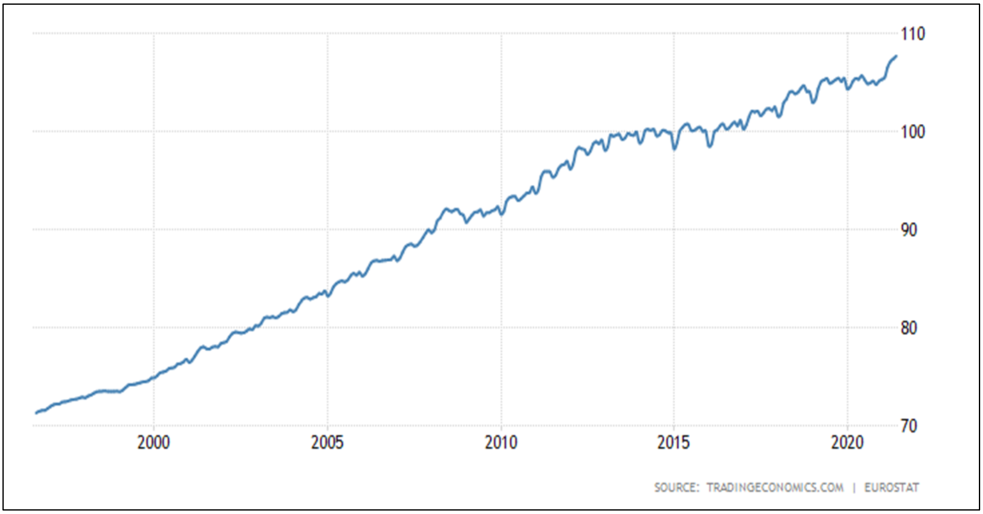


Fig. 9. Euro Area Inflation Rate YoY. Source: tradingeconomics.com



Fig. 10. Euro Area CPI. Source: tradingeconomics.com

We are seeing a pickup in inflation in the Euro Area and, although the monthly rate of change of inflation is decreasing, showcasing that the economy of the Euro Area is decelerating, a glance at the disposable personal income in the Euro Area might give us the same image that we are seeing in the United States: persistent inflation, to be understood as the gradual degradation of the purchasing power of the currencies (i.e. USD and EUR) mixed with a slow increase in the citizens' disposable income, has led to a stagnation in the standard of living of both Americans and Europeans.

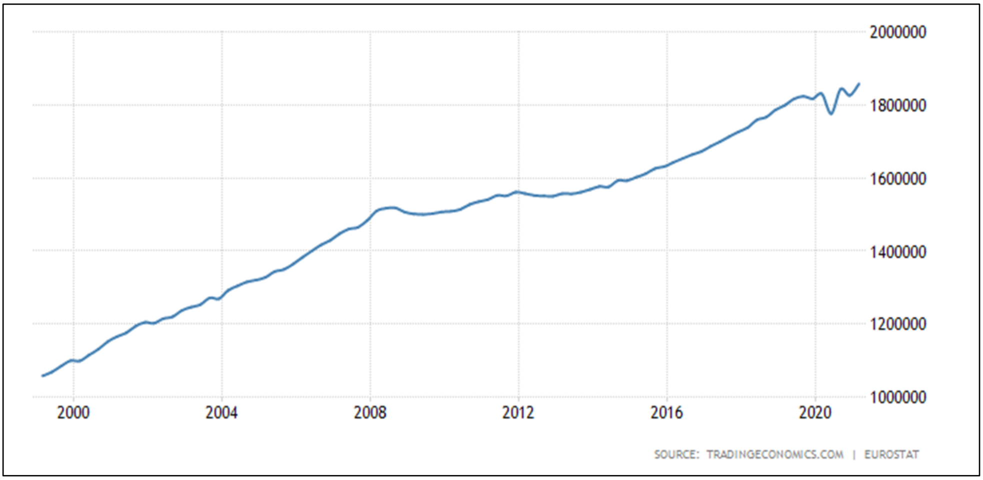


Fig. 11. Euro Area Disposable Personal Income. Source: tradingeconomics.com



Fig. 12. GOLD vs. EUR (2006-2021). Source: TradingView.com

When comparing the euro's purchasing power with the USD's, we must always look at the relationship between these two currencies and their relationship with gold respectively. The price of gold in US$ has been covered already (Fig. 5), and the story that chart is telling us is that the United States dollar is slowly but surely losing its purchasing power against the world's oldest form of money. A currency is nothing but a societal consensus on what can be used as a store of value, unit of account and medium of exchange; but when that consensus is based only on governmental and central bank policies, when things go wrong (i.e. the loss of purchasing power), society's trust in the government and authorities begins to shake and crumble and if history is any indicator, that is not a desirable course of action.

Compared to the United States dollar, the euro's evolution against gold was not so aggressive to the upside, which might suggest that the Euro Area citizens still have faith and place trust in the European project and in the utility and efficiency of the European Institutions to deliver economic prosperity across the entire Union.



Fig. 13. Euro vs. US Dollar (2002-2021).
Source: TradingView.com

The upside trend of gold against the euro, although not as aggressive as the one against the US dollar, tells us that faith in *fiat* (from Latin *fiat,* meaning "let it be done") currencies and, therefore, in governments, is slowly declining as consumers and investors see higher prices across the board from one year to the next, while most products and consumables see no rise in quality that might justify the rise in prices that usually occurs in a free market environment. Turning to the euro's relationship with the United States dollar, the chart tells us a different story. From a broader macro point of view, the chart tells us that in the long term the euro is losing against the US dollar and that should not be a surprise as the FED (The Federal Reserve), the Central Bank of the United States, has more tools at its disposal to encourage/fight inflation than the ECB (European Central Bank), not to mention the US dollar's status as the world's reserve currency, a status that the euro does not share. To showcase this, we have to look at the balance of trade, capital flows and the current account deficits/surpluses of the two polities.

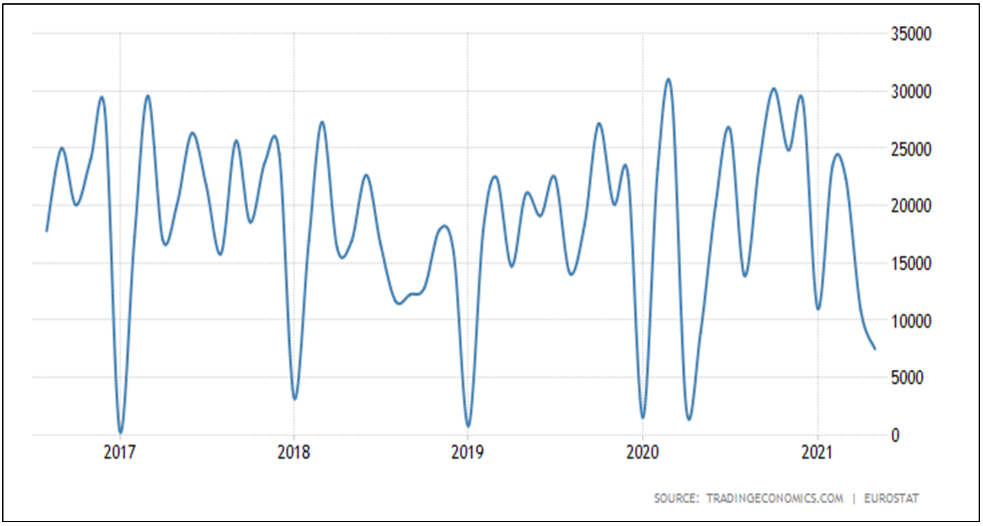


Fig. 14. Euro Area Balance of Trade (7.5 billion EUR as of May 2021).
Source: tradingeconomics.com

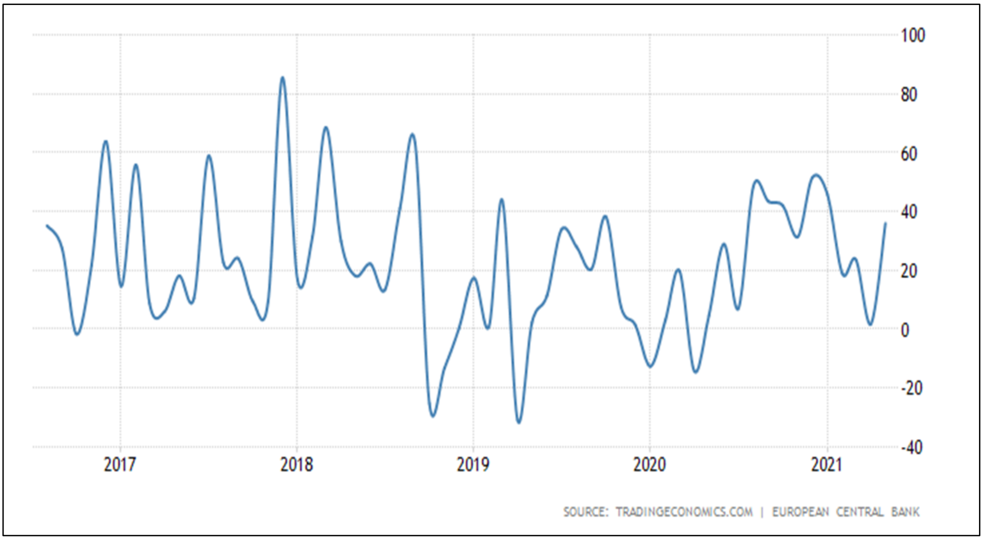


Fig. 15. Euro Area capital flows (35.92 billion EUR as of May 2021).
Source: tradingeconomics.com

What we are about to see is just why the euro lags behind the US in almost everything including inflation and why the euro needs to be weaker than the USD due to the nature of the Union being an export-driven economy.

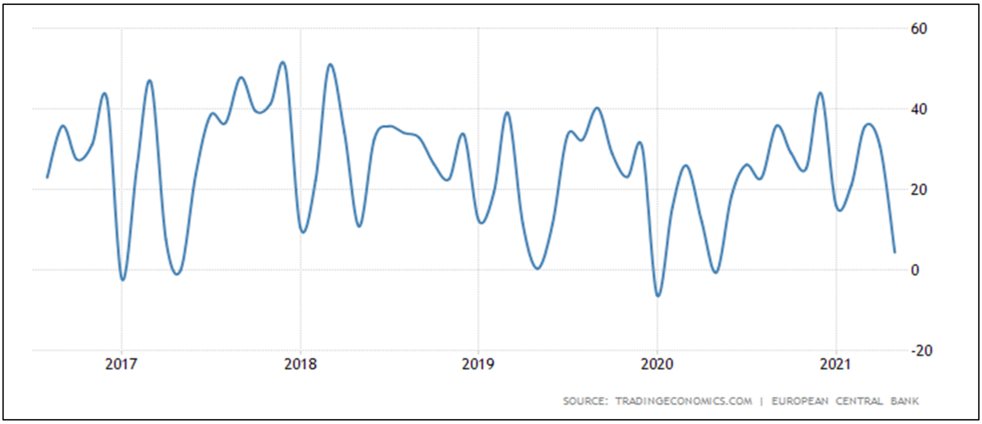


Fig. 16. Euro Area Current Account (4.3 billion EUR as of May 2021).
Source: tradingeconomics.com

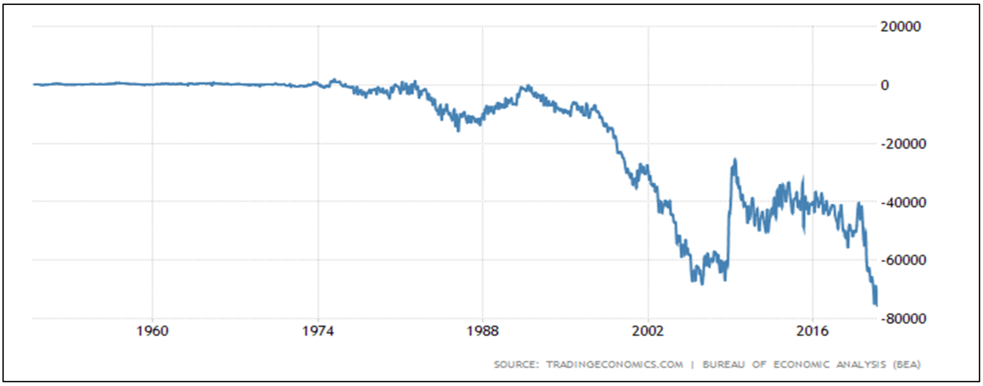


Fig. 17. US Balance of Trade (-75.7 billion USD as of June 2021).
Source: tradingeconomics.com

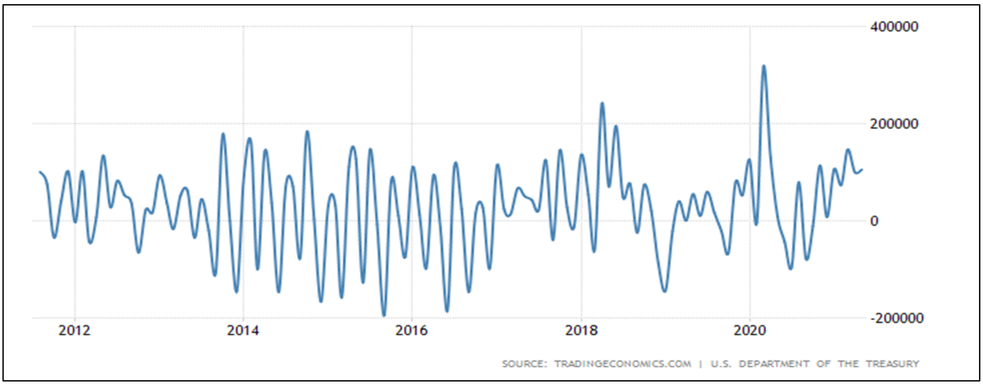


Fig. 18. US Capital Flows (105.3 billion USD as of May 2021).
Source: tradingeconomics.com

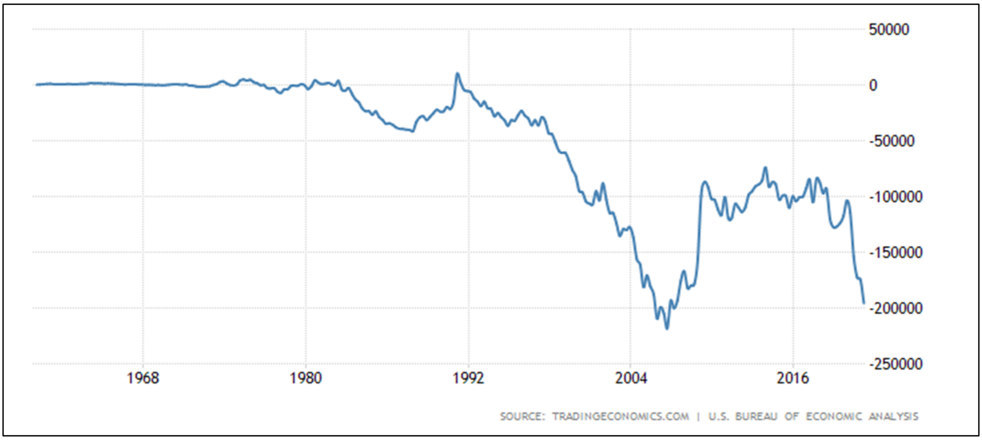


Fig. 19. US current account (-195.7 billion USD as of Q1 2021).
Source: tradingeconomics.com

These stark differences indicate why the euro lags behind the US dollar in terms of buying power and prestige. The dollar, despite the United States running such a massive trade and current account deficits, is still the "currency king" for the simple fact that there is no other currency that can replace it. The volume of trade denominated in EUR pales in comparison to that of the USD, the dollar has behind it a state, a military and well-established political institutions that function more efficiently than the sluggish EU institutions. By observing the charts related to Euro Area trade, we notice that, since the summer of 2020, the Euro Area countries as a whole have imported more than exported and this might be caused by the pressures on prices that resulted from the appreciation of the euro. On the other side of the Atlantic, the US is running massive deficits in order to ensure the development of emerging markets as everything is priced in US dollars, a strong dollar would put too much pressure on the currencies of emerging markets, therefore the US government and the Fed must balance the dollar between the domestic environment and the international one.

Concluding this section of the paper after the brief showcase of inflation in the US and the EU and inflation's effects on countries and empires in the past, and the differences between the purchasing power of both the euro and the USD and the markets' confidence in the two, we can safely assume that inflation is a danger that must be carefully monitored. It

can ruin even the most powerful of empires and it can transform previously democratic governments, as we have seen in Germany, into outright tyrannies. We have seen what a decrease in the standard of living and purchasing powers of Americans in the aftermath of the Great Financial Crisis of 2008 can lead to. Millions of Americans lost faith in governmental authorities to safeguard and increase their prosperity, many became angered and frustrated that President Obama's Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008,[3] also known as the "bank bailout," as the name suggests, was directed at the main investment banks on Wall Street rather than at helping the average American worker. Such macroeconomic shocks take time to materialize into societal changes. Obama was re-elected, but by 2016, although the economy and the stock market were in full expansion, the scars of 2008-2012 and the manifestation of distrust and even hatred at the establishment and its policies led to the election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th President of the United States, which heralded a tumultuous period for the transatlantic relationship. In Europe, we have had our fair share of dramatic changes, ranging from Brexit to the rise of extremist right-wing and populist politics and politicians that present a risk to the integrity of the European project

The Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank

There is no need for introduction when it comes to these two titans of the political, financial and economic world. The general public might be familiar with these two institutions, the newspapers, radios, TV news programs, social media all talk about these two behemoths as their actions have a far greater impact on our lives than most people would imagine. When it comes to the power of US institutions, the public tends to associate more power to political institutions such as the Supreme Court or the White House or even Congress, but on a day-to-day basis no institution has more power and is less known than the Federal Reserve, also known as the "Fed"

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[3] ProPublica, "Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, The TARP," n. d., https://projects.propublica.org/bailout/initiatives/2-emergency-economic-stabilization-act, accessed August 9, 2021.

or "The Federal Reserve System of the United States of America." Founded in 1913 by the Federal Reserve Act,[4] the stated purpose of the Fed now is to "achieve the monetary policy goals that Congress has given us, maximum employment and price stability."[5]

Monetary policy is the domain of central banks and it is their most important tool when working to achieve their mandates. Monetary policy is a fairly simple concept, it refers to the actions taken by a central bank to control the supply of money in the economy and through it, achieve their macroeconomic goals.[6] Monetary policy can be of different kinds: expansionary and contractionary. This refers to the money supply. An expansionary monetary policy, as the one we have today, means the stimulation of the economy by increasing the money supply and lowering the central bank interest rate (rate cuts) in order to ease the financial conditions in the economy (i.e., easing the access to credit by household, individuals and companies) so that the macroeconomic trend is tilted to the upside. This type of monetary policy is usually done in the aftermath of a recession and examples of this we can see in 2008[7] and 2020.[8] Contractionary monetary policy is the opposite. It occurs when the economy runs too hot and the Central Bank analysts and experts advise the Chair/Governor that stimulus is no longer needed and continuing to do so would only put inflationary pressures on an already expanding economy. This type of monetary policy is conducted through increasing the central bank interest

[4] The Federal Reserve, "Federal Reserve Act," December 23, 1913, https://www.federal reserve.gov/aboutthefed/fract.htm.

[5] Jerome Powell, "FOMC Press Conference July 28, 2021," 57:55, https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=ipRReN74LXE.

[6] Thomas Brock, "Monetary Policy," Investopedia, December 18, 2020, https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/monetarypolicy.asp.

[7] Jon Hilsenrath, "Fed Cuts Rates Near Zero to Battle Slump. Historic Move Boosts Stocks as Consumer Prices, Housing Starts Drop Sharply; Obama Calls for Government Spending Program," *Wall Street Journal*, December 17, 2008, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB122945283457211111.

[8] Nick Timiraos, "Fed Cuts Rates to Near Zero and Will Relaunch Bond-Buying Program. Bank will purchase $500 billion in Treasury securities, $200 billion in mortgage-backed securities," *Wall Street Journal*, March 15, 2020, https://www.wsj.com/articles/fed-faces-crucial-decisions-to-alleviate-virus-shock-11584303662.

rate (rate hikes) in order to shrink the money supply to an acceptable level consistent with the bank's inflation target.

A central bank has many tools at its disposal should it want to stimulate or contract the economy in order to prevent crises from happening and to achieve their own macroeconomic goals, be they price stability (control of inflation), maximum employment (one should never believe that this means a 0% unemployment rate) and a general level of economic stability.

The Fed's "baby sister," the ECB (European Central Bank), is the Central Bank of the Euro Area and it is comprised of all the central banks that make up the Euro System[9] (the 19 EU member countries that use the EUR as their main currency). It came into being with the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam[10] its stated goal is to "[…] maintain price stability. We do this by making sure that inflation remains low, stable and predictable. In this way we seek to help you plan your saving and spending."[11] In other, more technical words, the ECB goal for inflation is to keep it "below, but close to, 2% over the medium term."[12] On the 8th of July 2021, the European Central Bank changed its benchmark "below, but close to, 2%" inflation target to let inflation run above 2% over the medium term so that the inflationary pressures which the bank's analysts believe to be transitory in nature due to the effects of the reopening of the economy could be mitigated.[13]

Central banks have power of decision over our money. Although fiscal policy and economic policy is the realm of the executive, monetary policy shaped events, lives and societies for good. During the last crisis (i.e., the 2008 Great Financial Crisis), the central banks began using one of the most unknown and least understood tools to stimulate the ailing and

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[9] The European Central Bank, "Eurosystem Mission," n. d., https://www.ecb.europa.eu/ecb/orga/escb/eurosystem-mission/html/index.en.html, accessed August 10, 2021.

[10] Corporate Finance Institute, "European Central Bank (ECB). Central Bank for the Entire Eurozone," n. d., https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/economics/what-is-european-central-bank-ecb/, accessed August 11, 2021.

[11] The European Central Bank, "About," n. d., https://www.ecb.europa.eu/ecb/html/index.en.html, accessed August 11, 2021.

[12] The European Central Bank, "Monetary Policy," n. d., https://www.ecb.europa.eu/ecb/tasks/monpol/html/index.en.html, accessed August 11, 2021.

[13] The European Central Bank, "ECB's Governing Council Approves Its New Monetary Policy Strategy," July 8, 2021, https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/pr/date/2021/html/ecb.pr210708~dc78cc4b0d.en.html.

recessionary economies, QE or quantitative easing. It sounds like a term that only experts on Bloomberg, CNBC or the Wall Street Journal, or one of the many CEOs of Wall Street's hedge funds or investment banks, can decipher. QE (Quantitative Easing) has first been implemented during the difficult days of 2009 when then Fed Chair Ben Shalom Bernanke had the task of saving the American economy from total collapse. But what is quantitative easing? Quantitative easing is an unusual monetary policy tool with which Central Banks expand their balance sheets by buying various financial assets (i.e., long term securities) in order to ensure the system's liquidity and encourage the demand for credit by stimulating its supply.[14] As I have stated before, it was the Federal Reserve that started this process in 2009 and throughout the following decades the balance sheet of the Fed gradually increased, weakening the purchasing power of the USD and driving up the price of commodities (i.e. precious metals, oil, agriculturals and raw materials.[15]

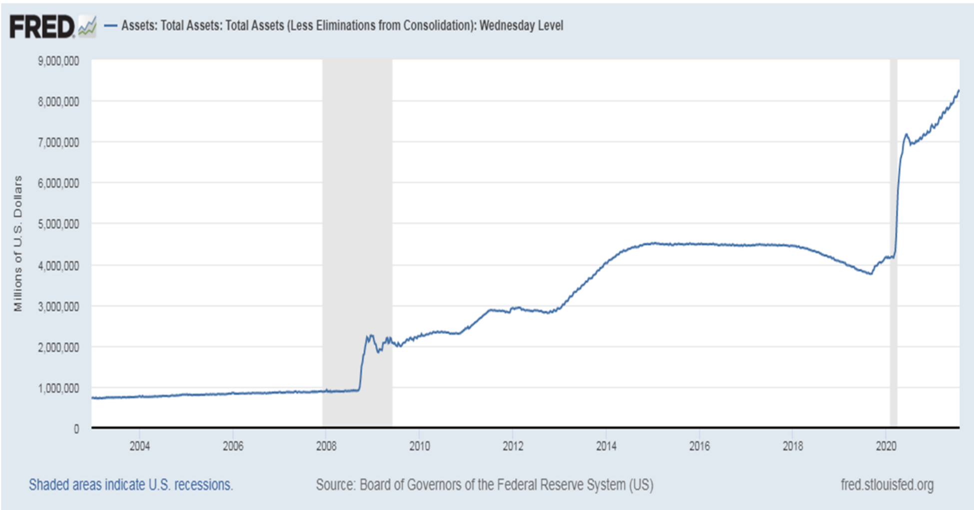


Fig. 20. Balance Sheet of the Federal Reserve. It reached 8 trillion USD in 2021 and it is estimated to reach 9 trillion in H2 2021. It represents 38% of the US's GDP. Source: fred.stlouisfed.org

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14 Thomas Brock, "Quantitative Easing (QE)," Investopedia, 9 May, 2021, https://www.investopedia.com/terms/q/quantitative-easing.asp.

15 Joy Wiltermuth, "Why the Fed's Balance Sheet Is Expected to Top $9 Trillion after It Starts Reducing Its Monthly Asset Purchases," MarketWatch, July 17, 2021, https://www.marketwatch.com/story/why-the-feds-balance-sheet-is-expected-to-top-9-trillion-after-it-starts-reducing-its-monthly-asset-purchases-11626135642.

The European Central Bank's QE operations, the APP (Asset Purchase Programs) was initiated in mid-2014 and compared to the Fed's (that buys Government Debt (i.e., treasury bonds) and mortgage-backed securities from banks)), the ECB program also includes TLTROs (Targeted Long Term Refinancing Operations).[16] After the onset of the 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic, in order to support the faltering EU economy, the ECB embarked on a new stimulative program, the PEPP (Pandemic Emergency Purchasing Program). According to the ECB, "The PEPP is a temporary asset purchase program of private and public sector securities. The Governing Council decided to increase the initial €750 billion envelope for the PEPP by €600 billion on 4 June 2020 and by €500 billion on 10 December, for a new total of €1,850 billion. All asset categories eligible under the existing asset purchase program (APP) are also eligible under the PEPP, as well as a waiver of the eligibility requirements has been granted for securities issued by the Greek Government."[17] Below is a chart that shows the current balance sheet of the ECB:



Fig. 21. The European Central Bank's Balance Sheet topped 8 trillion EUR in August 2021 and it represents 78% of the Eurozone's GDP.
Source: The Market Ear/Bloomberg

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[16] The European Central Bank, "Asset Purchase Programs," n. d., https://www.ecb.europa.eu/mopo/implement/app/html/index.en.html, accessed August 12, 2021.

[17] The European Central Bank, "Pandemic Emergency Purchasing Program (PEPP)," n. d., https://www.ecb. europa.eu/mopo/implement/pepp/html/index.en.html, accessed August 12, 2021.

Some readers might find themselves asking: "How is this a problem? The Central Banks are simply carrying out their duties as part of their mandate, why is this bad?" To respond to this question, we must first identify what are the most important characteristics of a public institution (the Central Banks are public institutions too) in a democratic system such as ours, because both the US and the EU share the same democratic principles and norms that make us allies, not just militarily but also normatively.

The most important characteristics are accountability and responsibility. We would be shocked and driven to rage if our governments ruled through edicts as kings and emperors once did, or as dictators today do (see China's Xi). If a party in government disappoints or is downright toxic for the nation and its wellbeing, the citizens penalize them when the time for voting comes again, this is the beauty of democracy. However, central bankers and central banks are neither democratically elected nor are they accountable to the voters in any way, shape or form. Moreover, monetary policy, which might just be the most important form of policy in a country, is nowhere to be found on a party's program and no form of assent from the public is given on it. Frankly, nobody asked us, the citizens of the EU, if we agree or disagree with Madame Lagarde's policies and none of us has ever cast a vote for or against Madame Lagarde's bid for the European Central Bank. As a Romanian citizen, I can understand why, Romania is not a member of the Euro Zone or the Eurosystem, but at the same time, never have I ever been asked (to vote) if I agree/disagree with Mr. Mugur Isărescu to serve as the Governor of the NBR (National Bank of Romania). Central Banks, through monetary policy, influence inflation and the money supply, ergo, they influence our purchasing power, the purchasing power of producers that, if it goes down (i.e., they need to pay more for raw materials and products) it translates into higher prices for food, energy, clothing etc., items which we use in our daily life. To showcase my argument, here are some charts:

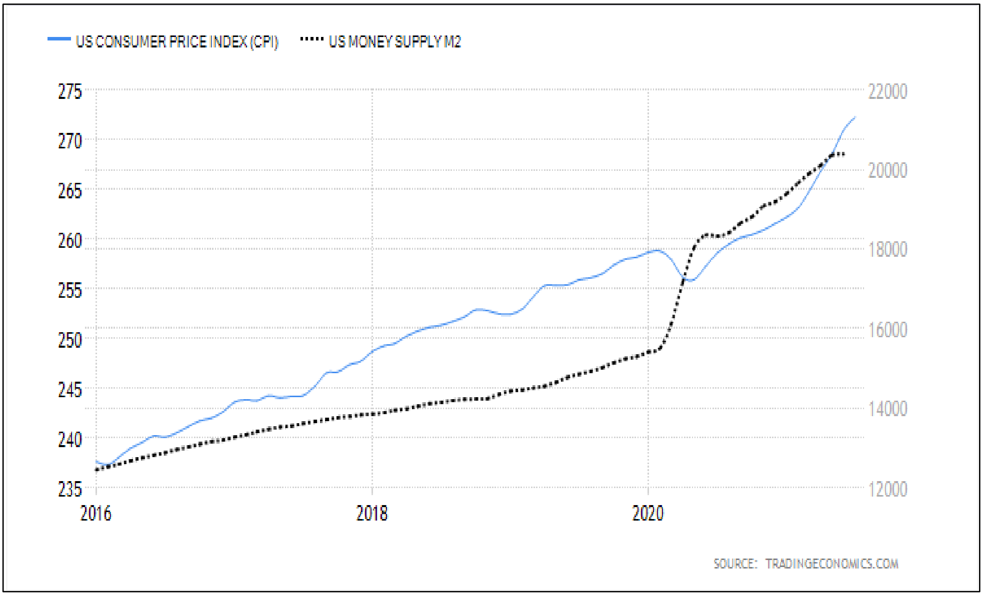


Fig. 22. US Consumer Price Index vs. US Money Supply M2. M2 is a measure of the money supply that includes cash, checking deposits, and easily convertible near money.
Source: tradingeconomics.com

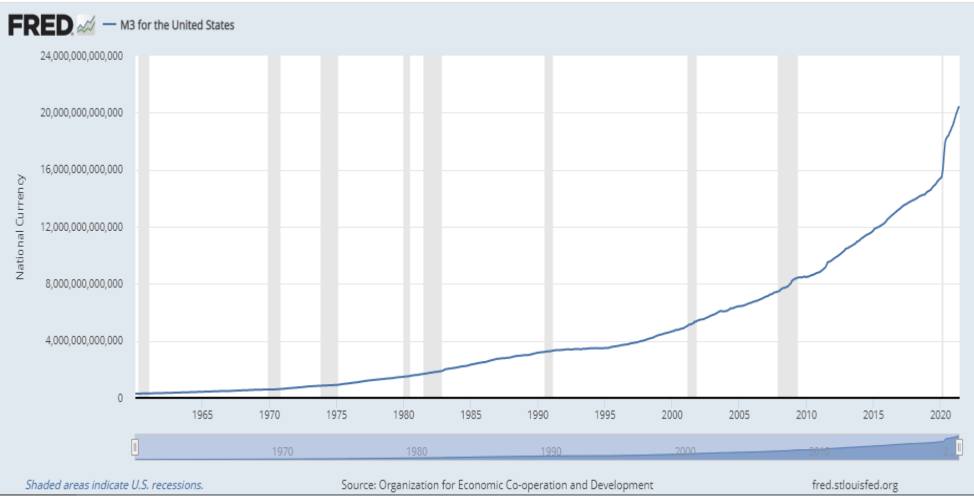


Fig. 23. US M3 Money Supply. M3 is a collection of the money supply that includes M2 money as well as large time deposits, institutional money market funds, short-term repurchase agreements, and larger liquid funds.
Source: fred.stlouisfed.org

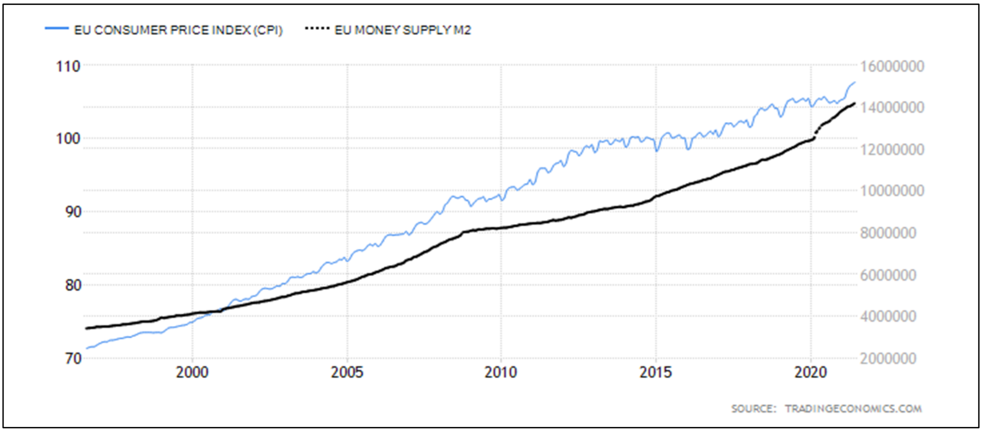


Fig. 24. Euro Area Consumer Price Index vs. Euro Area M2 Money Supply. Source: tradingeconomics.com

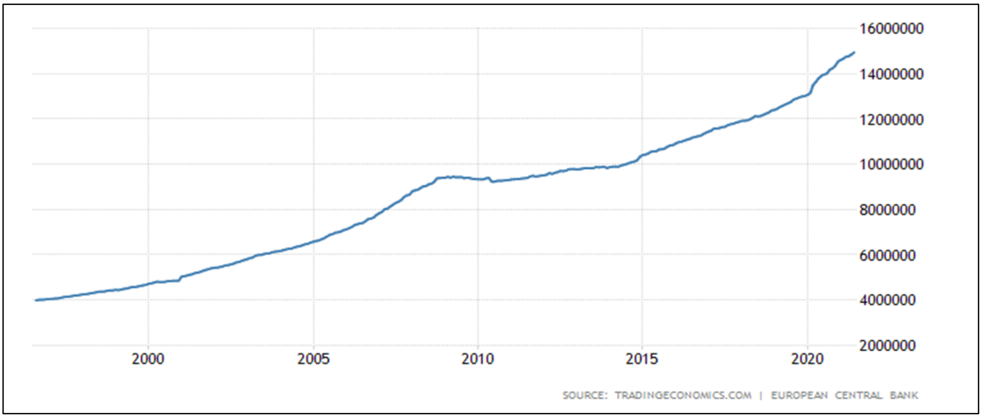


Fig. 25. Euro Area M3 Money Supply. Source: tradingeconomics.com

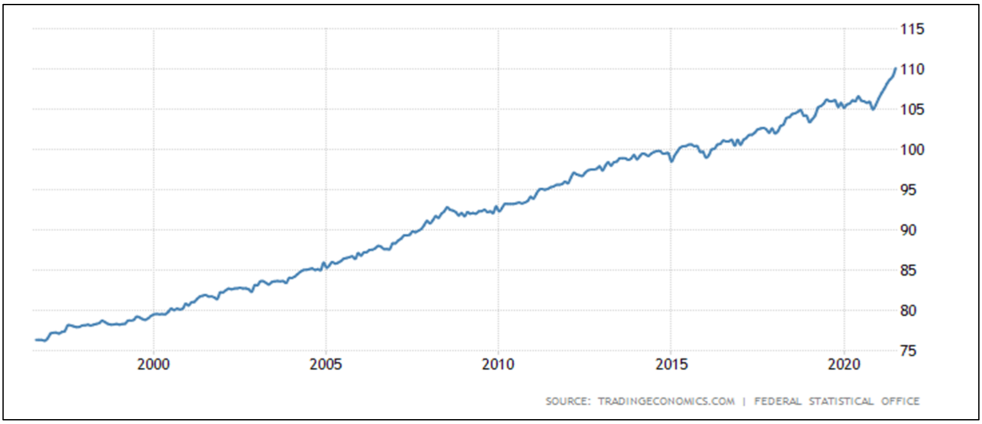


Fig. 26. Germany CPI (Consumer Price Index). Source: tradingeconomics.com

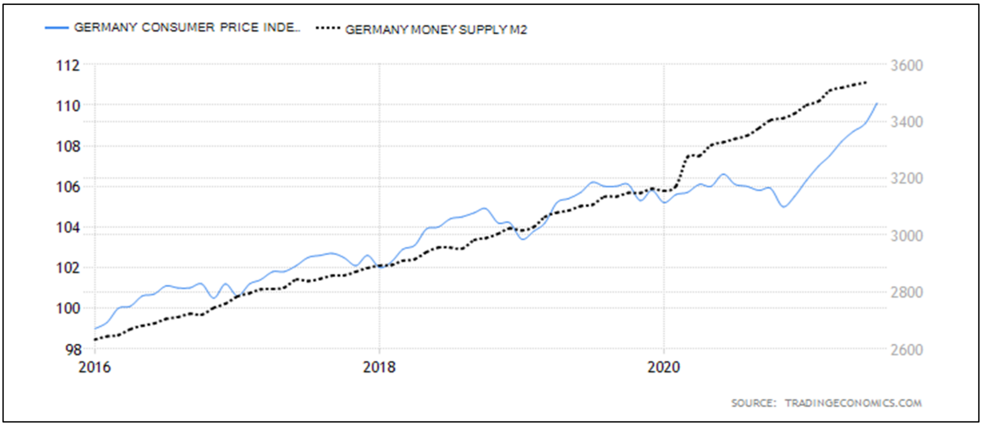


Fig. 27. Germany CPI vs. Germany M2 Money Supply. Source: tradingeconomics.com

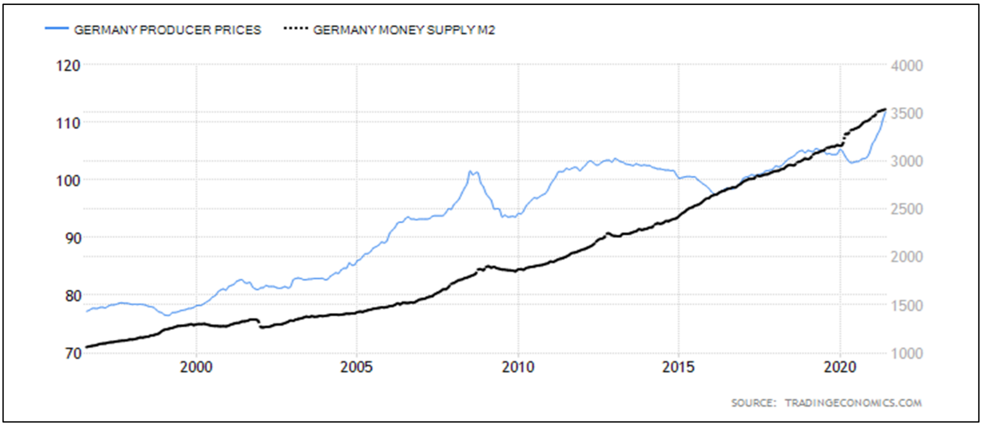


Fig. 28. Germany M2 Money Supply vs. Germany PPI (Producer Price Index). Source: tradingeconomics.com

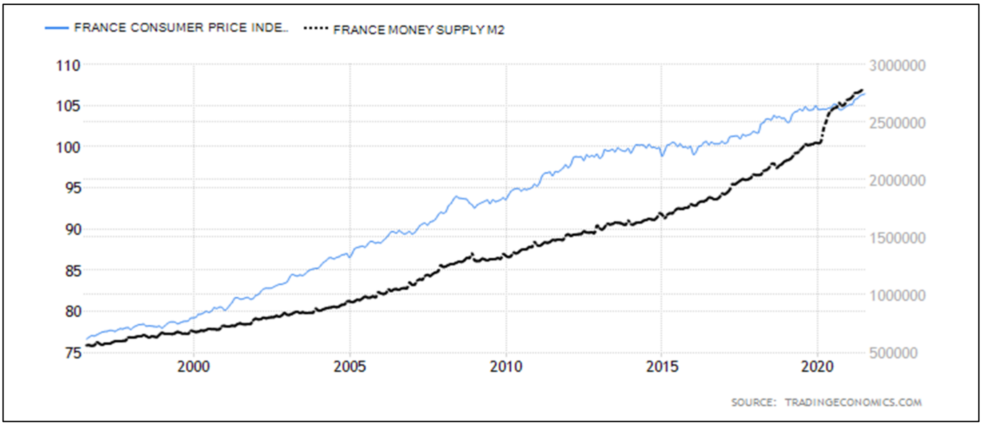


Fig. 29. France CPI vs. France M2 Money Supply. Source: tradingeconomics.com

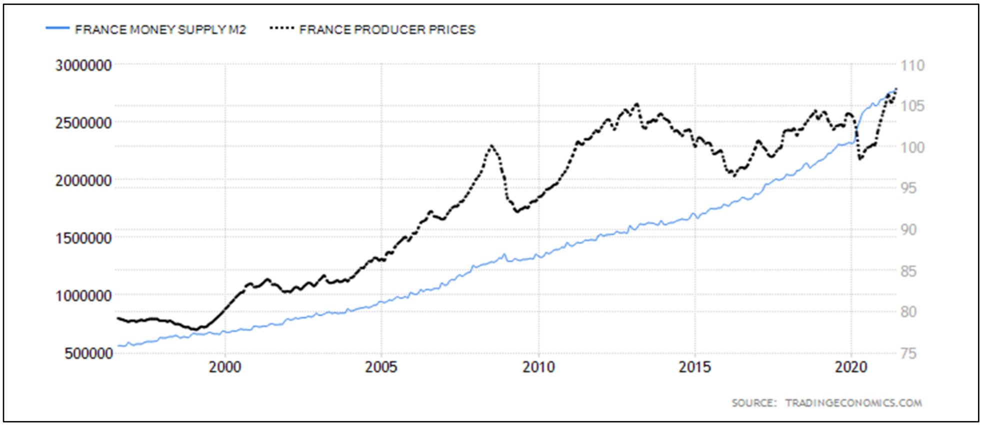


Fig. 30. France M2 Money Supply vs. France PPI (Producer Price Index). Source: tradingeconomics.com

As I have shown in the previous section, inflation (the steady decrease of a currency's purchasing power which generates higher consumer and producer prices) can have disastrous effects on a society. QE as a monetary policy tool should not be understood solely as money printing. The purpose of this policy is to stimulate demand in the economy by increasing the availability of credit to households and businesses and to do so, central banks buy assets and expand their balance sheets in order ensure the necessary liquidity for other economic actors to factor in and stabilize the economy. To determine whether it has it worked, let us take a look at a few charts.

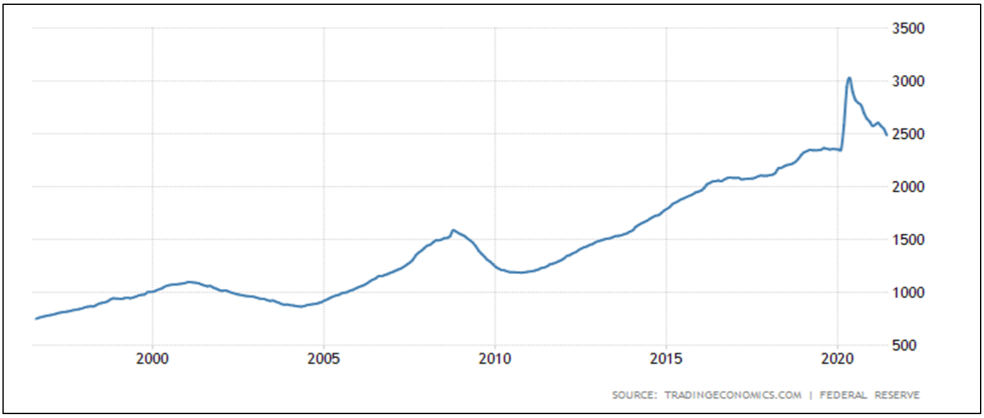


Fig. 31. US Commercial and Industrial Loans. Sitting currently at 2.5 trillion USD the upside trend that started in early 2010 peaked in 2020 and now is moving towards the 2020 low as the Fed's balance sheet is still expansionary and inflation numbers are still at a decade high. Source: tradingeconomics.com

This chart suggests that although we experienced the longest bull market (term used by finance specialists to suggest an expansionary period in the economy and the financial markets) since the GFC (Great Financial Crisis), the flow of credit to the private sector in the US grew at a slow pace when compared to the expansionary balance sheet of the Federal Reserve. The flow of credit to the private sector in the US spiked in early 2020 as the Federal Reserve lowered its benchmark interest rate to 0.25% and started its 4th QE program to stimulate the economy and help it recover in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.[18]

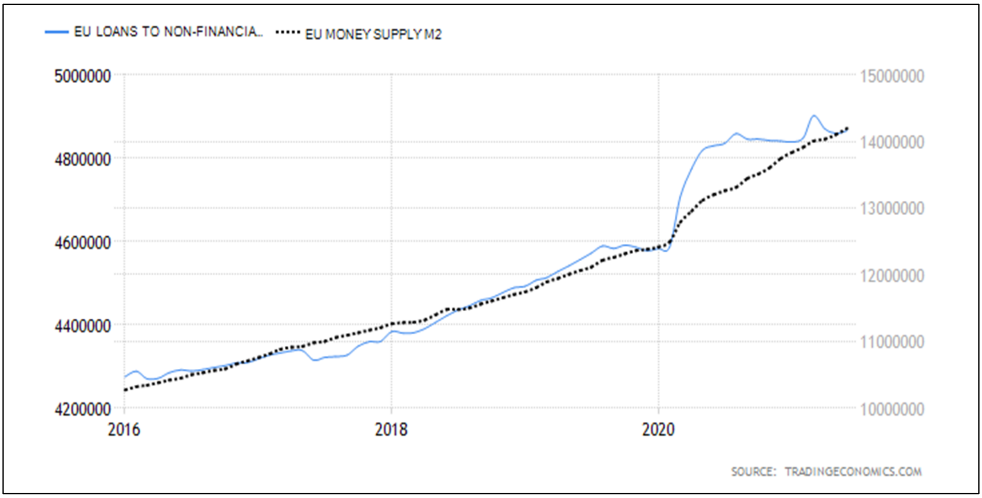


Fig. 32. Euro Area Loans to Non-financial Corporations vs.
EU M2 Money Supply.
Source: tradingeconomics.com

Meanwhile, in Europe, with the ECB benchmark interest rate at 0%, the lending rate at 0.25% and the deposit rate at -0.5%, savers are discouraged from keeping their money in banks; instead, they should go and spend either on retail goods or invest in small businesses.

[18] Jeffrey Cheng, Tyler Powell, Dave Skidmore, and David Wessel, "What's the Fed Doing in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis? What More Could It Do?," Brookings, March 30, 2021, https://www.brookings.edu/research/fed-response-to-covid19/.

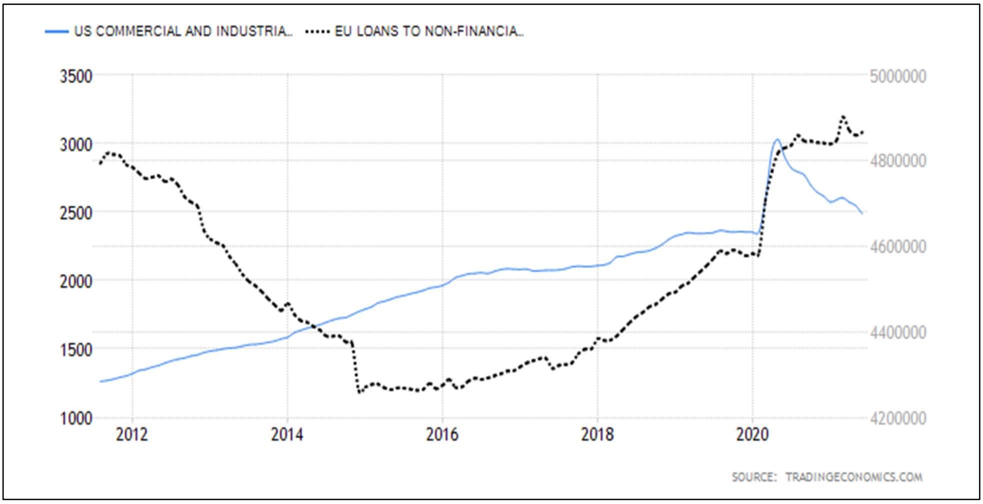


Fig. 33. US Commercial and Industrial Loans vs. EU Loans to Non-financial Corporations. Source: tradingeconomics.com

At this point in time, by looking at these two charts, we observe that Euro Area credit flow was slower than its US counterpart, but it eventually picked up and it even overtook it during H1 of 2021. However, it is important to look at the inflation and GDP data too in order to see if that quantity of money was put to work in the economy.

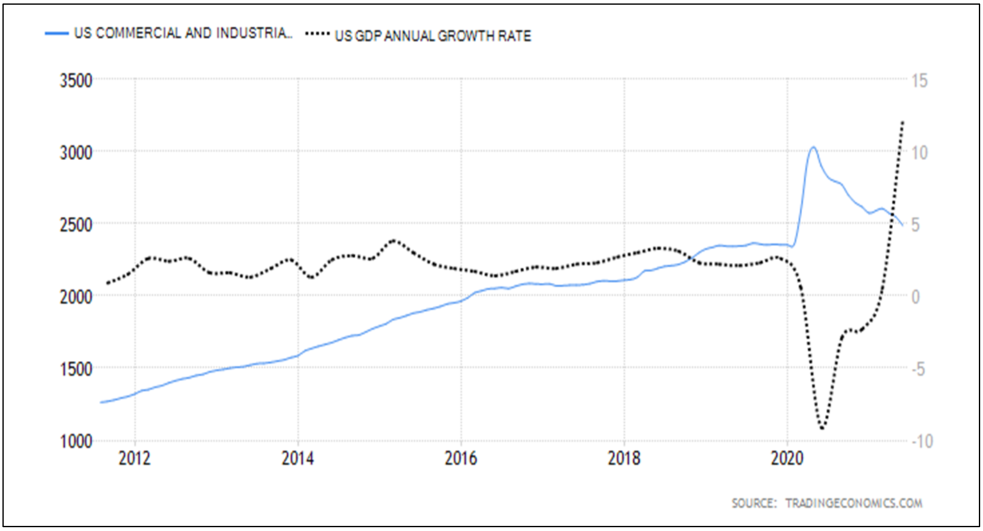


Fig. 34. US Commercial and Industrial Loans vs. US GDP Annual Growth Rate. Source: tradingeconomics.com

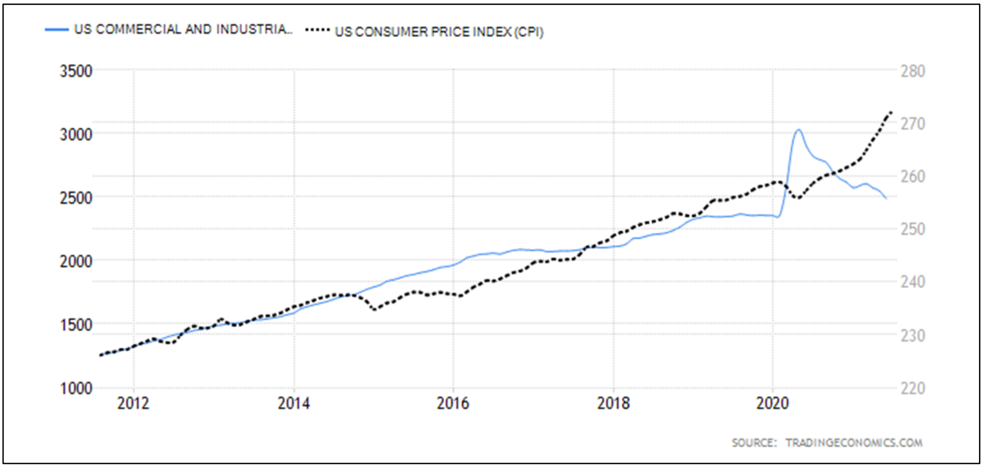


Fig. 35. US Commercial and Industrial Loans vs. US CPI.
Source: tradingeconomics.com

As loans to the private sector increased, so did the US YoY GDP growth rate, indicating to us that the private sector was efficient at investing the money borrowed from the banks, but as the credit flow is slowing in the United States, the Consumer Price Index is making new highs indicating that prices are increasing both for consumers and producers. The confidence of the American consumer is dwindling and, although financial conditions are the easiest they have ever been, the incentives to borrow at a low price are slowly fading.



Fig. 36. US Financial Conditions Index (The lower the reading, the easier the conditions are). Source: The Market Ear/Goldman Sachs

Let us take a look at Europe now and see if the situation there might offer us a glimpse into the ECB's QE effectiveness.

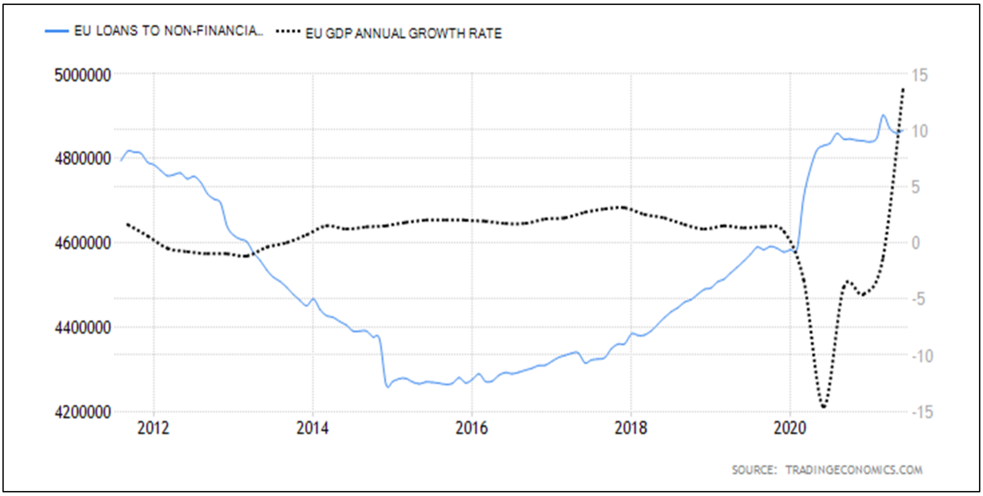


Fig. 37. Euro Area Loans to Non-financial Corporations vs. Euro Area GDP Annual Growth Rate. Source: tradingeconomics.com

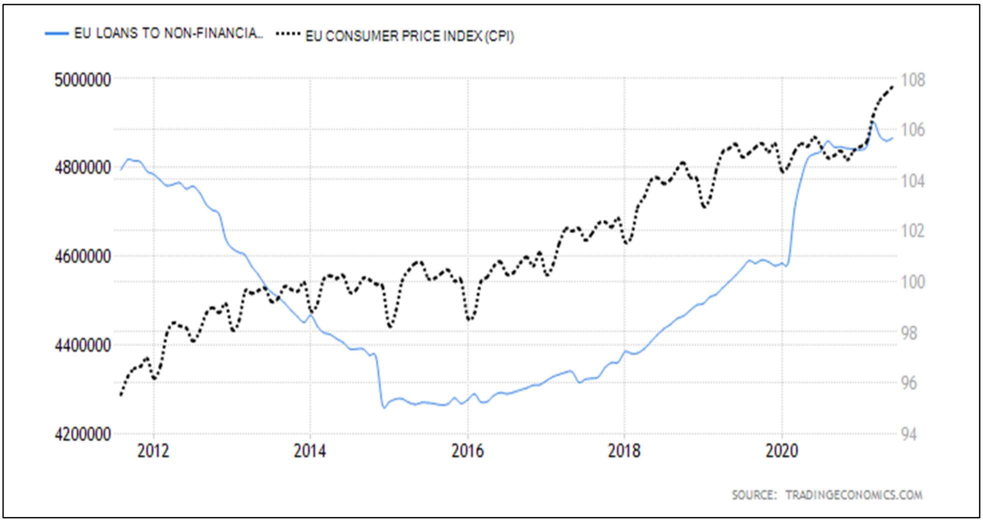


Fig. 38. Euro Area Loans to Non-financial Corporations vs. Euro Area CPI. Source: tradingeconomics.com

Europe is telling us the same story. As the economy recovers from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and businesses reopen, businesses

borrowed money in order to cover their pandemic expenses and even invest in new technologies and ways to improve themselves, leading to a surge in the Annual Growth Rate of GDP. However, looking at inflation, we see the same higher prices that we notice in the United States. Due to the excess of credit supply in the banks and increased production costs, both producers and sellers are now speculating that inflation is not as transitory as the Central Banks claim,[19] a thing which makes it hard for any entrepreneur to even consider borrowing, albeit at a low price, and investing in a new business that will find itself in a climate of higher prices. Higher inflation prints and an expansionary monetary policy and central bank balance sheet when the economy recovers from a recession will prompt Central Banks to engage in tapering[20] (reducing the amount of securities and assets purchased by the bank (reverse QE) and eventually hiking interest rates in order to reduce the inflationary pressures from the economy and contract the money supply.

To conclude this section, having explained the role of monetary policy and central banks, what tools they have at their disposal and how powerful they are in today's world, it is of paramount importance to monitor the effects that their policies have on the lives of consumers because that serves as a tool with which we can measure their trust in the government and its agencies. Let us take a look at a chart published by Reuters in June 2021[21] which shows that President Biden's administration's popularity diminished in June compared with April of this year when it comes to its handling of the economy. This might be caused by the higher inflation prints and the surge in inflation expectations by the markets. Let us see:

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[19] Martin Tillier, "Fed Chair Powell Still Insists Inflation is Transitory, And the Markets Agree. Why?," Nasdaq, July 15, 2021, https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/fed-chair-powell-still-insists-inflation-is-transitory-and-the-markets-agree.-why-2021-07; Martin Arnold, Mehreen Khan, "Christine Lagarde Dismisses Inflation Pressure as Temporary," *Financial Times*, May 21, 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/f8208eca-3932-4783-b8a5-23e82e198223.

[20] Akhilesh Ganti, "Tapering," Investopedia, July 7, 2021, https://www.investopedia.com/terms/t/tapering.asp.

[21] Chris Kahn, "Support for Biden Erodes among Democrats as U.S. Looks Past Pandemic," Reuters, June 30, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/world/us/support-biden-erodes-among-democrats-us-looks-past-pandemic-2021-06-30/.

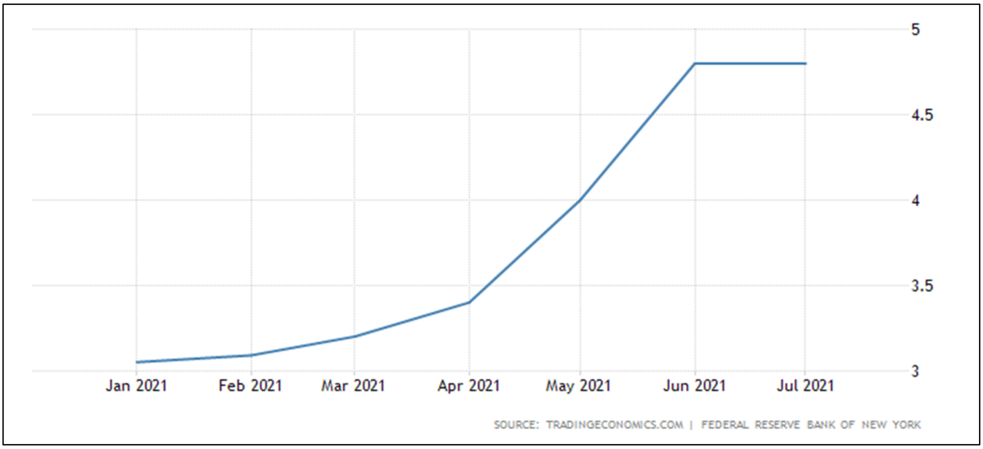


Fig. 39. US Consumer Inflation Expectations. Source: tradingeconomics.com

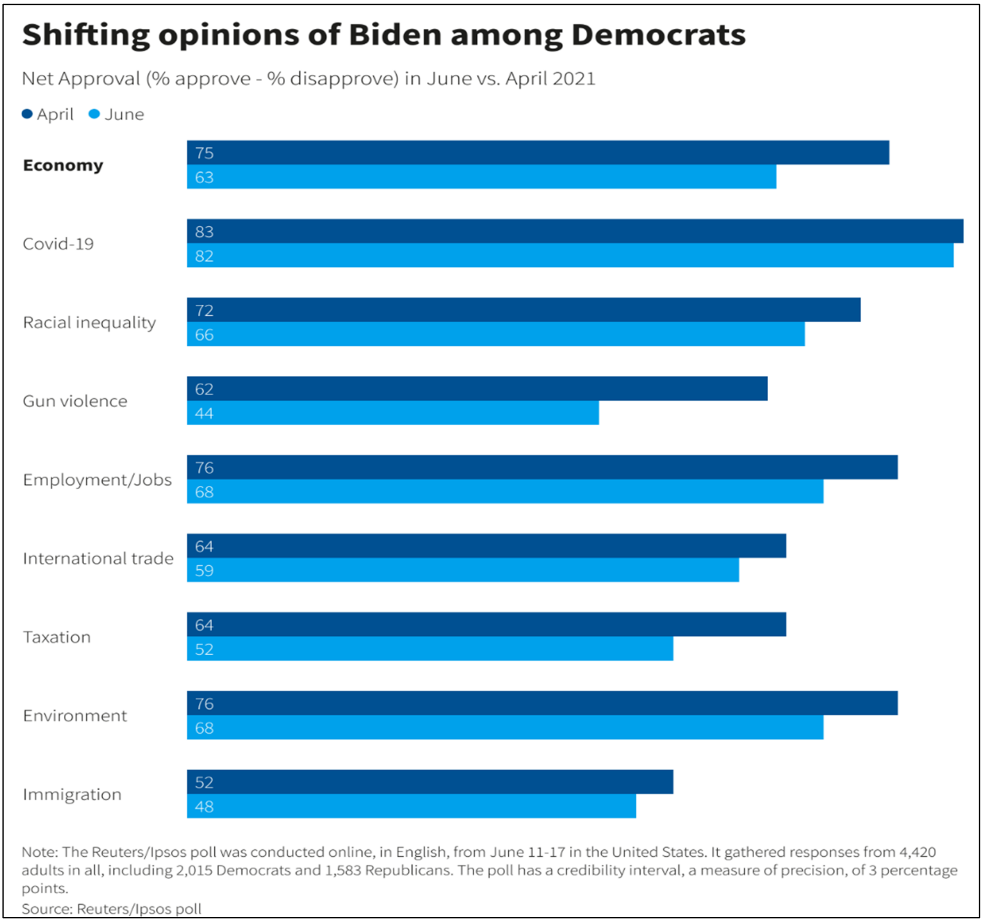


Fig. 40. Shifting opinions of Biden among Democrats. Source: Reuters.com

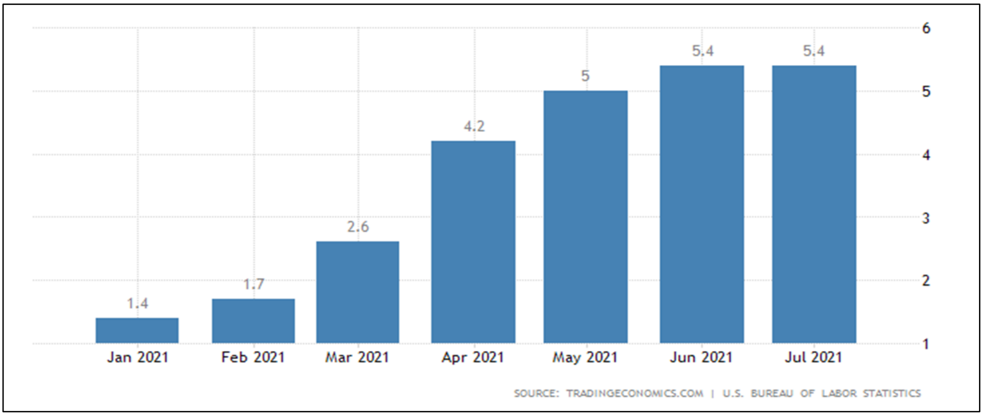


Fig. 41. US Inflation Rate YoY

"Correlation does not mean causation." This is a familiar saying among people unfamiliar with macroeconomics and the markets. It might be that inflation is indeed transitory, as Fed Chair Jerome Powell and ECB President Madame Lagarde are telling us and so, beginning with 2022, we should expect lower prints in the inflation metrics. However, it cannot be disputed that these high readings in inflation are not at all the Central Banks' doing. Expanding the balance sheets through the purchasing programs (QE), creating excess liquidity in the market by stimulating the credit supply and demand with lower, close to zero, interest rates, coupled with the Governments' stimulus packages and loose fiscal policies has led to the salvation of many jobs and companies. Nevertheless, credit flow has been under stress recently and unemployment has remained elevated in both the United States and the Euro Area and "above" the targets of the two Central Banks that I have talked about.

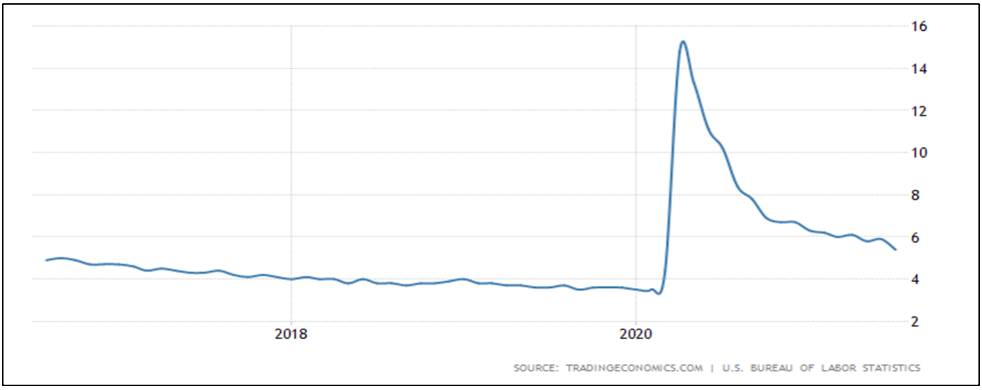


Fig. 42. United States Unemployment Rate. Source: tradingeconomics.com

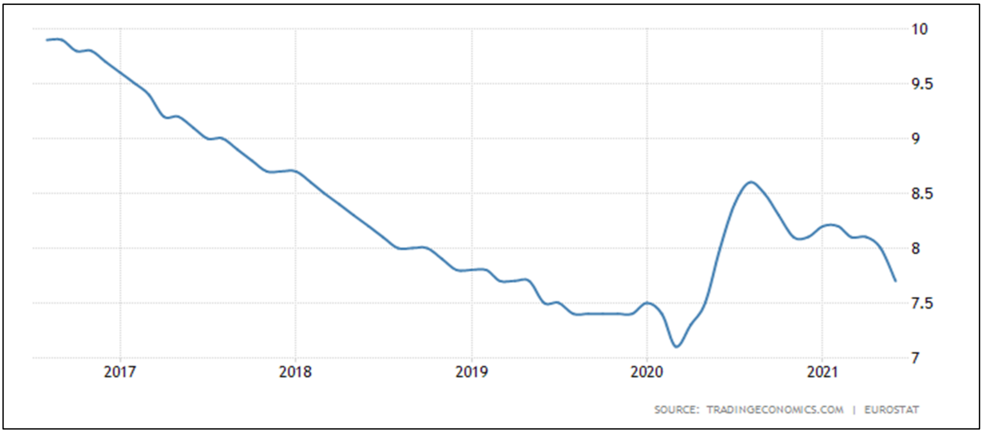


Fig. 43. Euro Area Unemployment Rate.
Source: tradingeconomics.com

This means that the stimulative monetary policy and quantitative easing programs are still in place, which can only mean two things. As the economy reopens and the investors' confidence returns, the credit flow to households and businesses will accelerate, therefore the economy will expand and thrive. But should investors' confidence in the ability of central banks and governments to combat inflation and limit the spread of the virus' various variants, credit flow will slow down and high inflation readings will be persistent, translating into higher prices for our everyday goods. From here on out, we will have to wait and see and then judge the merits and effectiveness of the largest governmental intervention in the economy in history.

Conclusions

The impact of the 2008 GFC translated in society's trust in the government and the banks being severely eroded and, although President Obama (2008-2016) won another term, his party lost the House of Representatives. This is a clear example on how an economic shock can translate into a political one as well. The large deficits, the weak economy and the "bank bailout" drew the ire of the American consumer/voter and, when Donald Trump began promising a return to prosperity by announcing his desire to "Make America Great Again," this resonated with many

disillusioned Americans. His populist and isolationist discourse led to his election in 2016 and his subsequent inauguration as the 45th POTUS (President of the United States) in 2017, starting one of the 21st century's most erratic and unstable presidencies. His unusual policies, his antagonistic stance towards state and government heads in Europe, his criticism of the NATO alliance, all of these represented a turning point in contemporary politics. It signaled to the Europeans that the time had come to start entertaining the idea that the United States might not always be Europe's ally and that Europe's destiny must lie in its own hands.[22]

Due to the globalized nature of our two economies, the dangers that the United States face might spill over into Europe. For the moment, Europe is not facing the same inflationary pressures as the United States does, but if the economy is going to reopen sluggishly and the ECB will go on and on with their stimulus, we might as well see that high inflation reaches our shores as well. As I have shown in previous charts, the PPI (Producer Price Index) is growing at a faster rate than the CPI (Consumer Price Index). This tells us that producers have to pay more in order to produce the items we all buy daily and/or weekly and it is only a matter of time before this lag between the PPI and the CPI reduces and we will see higher prices for everything: food in supermarkets, airline tickets, hotel rooms, food and beverages at bars and restaurants, fuel and energy etc. I have shown at the beginning of this paper what inflation does to a society and its politics and should we find ourselves facing another crisis and see our standards of living eroded and our purchasing power going south, there is the danger that populism and extremist discourses will re-emerge to prominence and even win power in Europe's largest economies as we have seen happening across the pond.

And so it is that our future is shaped in no-small measure by the central banks and whether those policies are for good or ill, it remains to be seen. Germany's Angela Merkel is going to be replaced soon by a new Chancellor and French president Emmanuel Macron faces re-election next

[22] The Economist, "Emmanuel Macron Warns Europe: NATO Is Becoming Brain-dead," November 7, 2021, https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead.

year. If the transatlantic relationship and alliance is to endure, prosper and thrive, both polities must have responsible and accountable politicians and bureaucrats in charge, people that think pragmatically, their policies driven by data and the principle of efficiency and balance, not by ideology and party creed. We must also pay close attention to the US dollar as a reserve currency and the rise of China. Should the USD lose its status as a reserve currency, the authority and credibility of the US government will be shattered. As the world's largest export economy, China plays an important role here. If the Chinese renminbi becomes an in-demand currency and it slowly starts to replace the USD, Europe might as well turn to China when it comes to business, should America prove that it is no longer a reliable and profitable business partner because after all, "*pecunia non olet*" ("Money does not stink"), as Emperor Vespasianus (69-79 AD) said almost two millennia ago.

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The New “Normal” in Politics

LYUBOMIR STEFANOV

The world has become a stranger place to live in. First, it was Trump arriving on the back of post-truth reality. Then, it was a global wave and surge of “neoconservatism” fighting a self-compromised neoliberalism. Now it is a global health pandemic ruling over our everyday lives and socio-political agenda. Due to the controversies around the consequences and the management of these phenomena, populism looks more and more appealing to many – both citizens and politicians, throughout Europe and the USA. What is even more surprising is that it is not considered or looked upon as the ultimate evil anymore, as was the case some 5-7 years earlier, but rather as a return to grassroots politics – unfiltered communication with the population over their demands, needs and desires. This “normalization” of politics still seems unexpected to the political establishment and the cultural and intellectual elite. As for the economic one – big money always manages to sway different viewpoints their way.

The following text will present some more general observations and conclusions based on a case study – that of a newly emerged Bulgarian political party “There is such a people” (TSP-ITN in Bulgarian)[1] and its surprising rise to the national political center stage. Some parallels will be drawn between the rise of Donald J. Trump to the presidency in the US, while being perfectly aware of differences in the scale, the environment and the general socio-political agenda of the US society. Regardless of the ultimately incomparable political systems – unitary parliamentary republic vs. presidential federal republic – there are plenty of unlikely similarities precisely due to the rise of the new digital politics. The methods for

[1] For details about the original pronunciations of the names of the Bulgarian political parties mentioned in the article, see the List of abbreviations and transliteration at the end.

communication with the general public that brought such unexpected success to Trump, mainly his extremely polarized general political discourse that went beyond common sense, evidence or reason, via Facebook, Twitter and the cable network outlet FOX, were borrowed to a great extent by the TSP leader, Stanislav Trifonov. He chose to address the citizens in Bulgaria via his own night show aired on his private cable TV channel 7/8 TV. Whenever he desired to make some broader appeal to all Bulgarians, he simply reached out on Facebook and livestreamed or pre-recorded video talks on hot issues or key topics. Still, let us go back to the origin of the new "normal" in politics.

Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser argue that populism is more than a mere *Kampfbegriff* (battle term) to stigmatize and decry political opposition and that it is too vague to be subject to a proper definition. According to them, populism is "a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people."[2] Furthermore, their suggestions on the nature of populism make them identify a couple of possible approaches to the matter:

1. The Popular Agency Approach, where populism is a positive force for the rallying and assembly of the masses and the molding of communitarian democracy.
2. The Laclauan Approach, where liberal democracy is outright demonized and populism is an emancipatory force in the service of radical democracy.
3. The Socioeconomic Approach, where populist economics reshape economic policy, at first stimulating it with large-scale investments and disbursements, typically accrued through foreign debt, but stifling it afterwards via hyperinflation and needed readjustments.
4. The Charismatic Approach, where the crowd is conquered and put under the spell of the leader's appeal and charisma.

[2] Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 6.

5. The Folkloric Approach, where the leaders or parties pull off provocative shenanigans and/or go against cultural customs in order to grab media attention and optimize popular support.[3]

Building on the abovementioned definitions, Benjamin Moffitt conceptualizes the development of populism as political style and strategy-look-alike by undergoing two distinct stages: Mediatization and Crisis.[4] At stage one, populism is imparted by mass media, and the storytelling process behind it, as well as how the narrative is retold, is fashioned and translated by the respective placeholder medium. In the contextual nexus of politics/media, some of the key components of populist political communication, according to Moffitt, are simplification, polarization, intensification, personalization, visualization, stereotypization, emotionalization, anti-establishment attitude, negativism, sports-based dramatization, the triumph of "style" over "substance," the prioritization of conflict and focus on scandals.[5] In this respect, to provide but a few examples, rejection of technocratic opinion is seen as an anti-institutional critique; disregard for norm or etiquette is represented as individualism; anti-elitism is a conflict-seeking behavior or pursuit of the common good; anti-governmentalism is solidarity for the people; and political incorrectness is pigeonholed into the next convenient stereotype.

Essentially, by deploying reductionism and simplifications, dividing politics into a dichotomous landscape, and placing emphasis on the "big personalities" on the horizon, populist devices make politics easy and accessible for the general population and people who otherwise lack the capacity and/or literacy to read into the more intricate facets of politics, like ideological ramifications, policy-making, various legalist dynamics and so on. During stage two, populism generates crises for the sake of self-perpetuation and appearing ever more relevant. To do so, Moffitt writes, populist actors "perform crisis" through six simple steps:[6] identifying failure – be it political, financial, policy-related, representative or democratic – and drawing urgent attention to it; escalating said failure to the level of a crisis

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[3] Mudde and Kaltwasser, *Populism,* 3-4.

[4] Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).

[5] Moffitt, *Global Rise of Populism,* 82.

[6] Moffitt, *Global Rise of Populism,* 125.

by broadening its contextuality and contemporizing it; framing the crisis into a conflict of opposed interests where the constituent body of the people finds itself matched against the root causes of the crisis; propagating the newly fabricated crisis through omnichannel media outlets; assuming messianic-like leadership and suggesting oversimplified solutions; continuous mediatization of the crisis.

After this crash-entry into the latest theoretical developments in the study of populism, let us have a look at contemporary Bulgaria at this point in time. After the regularly scheduled elections in April 2021, no political party managed to either get a single majority or build a coalition that has one in the parliament. After a tense couple of weeks amidst rising political discontent between the parties elected to the 45th National Assembly – GERB, TSP, BSP, MRF, Democratic Bulgaria and Rise up BG! Mafia out!, the president dissolved the parliament, called for snap elections and appointed an interim cabinet. The background to the story, however, reveals the longer and much older roots of this scenario.

In the campaign prior to the regular elections, the central topic and issue for apolitical parties was whether they were with or against the outgoing cabinet (3rd in a row) of the GERB leader, Boyko Borisov. The antagonism was a reflection of (and caused by) huge public discontent and disapproval of the way the state had been governed in the past decade, blaming Borisov that he had built a party-state and person-centered governmental structure around himself that had led Bulgaria to disastrous economic, social and political results. The peak of his inability to rise to the level of commitment and expertise required when dealing with statesmanship was the manner in which he treated the protest against the public prosecutions' storming of the presidential office in a supposed search for alleged criminal evidence. The Protest, as it became known, lasted through the whole summer of 2020 and brought to light a list of numerous well-known deficits and misconducts from Borisov's past governments. However, above all, there was the call for removing the general public prosecutor, as his personality along with abnormalities in the procedure that had led to his appointment, became a symbol of the captured state where some are above the law.

In turn, this appeal for restoring the rule of law as one of the holy founding principles of modern democracy stimulated the political competition in Bulgaria and reinvigorated the debate about the political system of democracy and how it should look in a country that prides itself in being a member of the European Union. Investigating the balance among the nature of the three governmental branches, the management of public and EU funds as well as the Covid-19 crisis (the preparation of the national plan for recovery included) led to GERB becoming a target for every political subject who aspired to glory. Borisov and his party found themselves surrounded by political enemies on all sides and even their former allies in the ruling coalition – VMRO, NFSB and Attack –more or less distanced themselves on some key issues, i.e., Eurozone currency membership, immigration, incomes, pensions, social benefits, taxes.

The interim government appointed by the president did not do any favor to this political siege of the GERB. Apparently holding a grudge for all the conflicts he had been put through over the past five years, president Radev gave to the new government the task to revise as many GERB policies and decisions from the past four years as possible. In a desperate attempt to defend itself and its leader from the political hunt, GERB labeled all the efforts of the president and his cabinet ministers as biased and declared that they had been victimized for not playing along on the alleged Russian connections of the president. As a result, the snap elections were called in an atmosphere of piling political resentment and extremely polarized positions on the situation; many Bulgarians started to finally see how GERB had been ruling the country in the past and approved the moves of the interim cabinet, even though mostly from pure subconscious satisfaction that Borisov was on the receiving end of the power and was no longer the all-powerful prime minster from the past decade.

Next to GERB, the party which suffered the most from the situation was TSP. Surprisingly emerging as a prime challenger to GERB after the regular elections, the formation of the popular TV host and music artist Stanislav (Slavi) Trifonov had to deal with the expectations it had generated to a great extent. Surprised by its result, the party refused to enter into any political negotiations with the other political subjects in the parliament,

including those whose publicly declared political goals were similar, like DB and RUBGMO. Instead, it announced that it would not succumb to the pressure and fall victim to the status quo by forming a minority cabinet with the other protest-flying parties, nor will it look for any support from BSP or MRF, as it labelled them system parties of the old corrupt order. Thus, it formally accepted the mandate from the president when GERB failed to fulfil it as winners after the regular elections, and returned it immediately with the abovementioned motives stated again. That led to a spiral of moves naturally resulting in snap elections.

Looking at the behavior of Slavi Trifonov and his party, one cannot help but find it an exemplary model of the theory Benjamin Moffitt described in 2016.[7] His political style fits the description of the various aspects populism has set up as a norm almost perfectly: bad manners, rough language, celebrity style appearance through the means of self-owned media, claiming to possess a messiah-type aura and abilities to overcome hard times and solve crises, the overall result being similar to what Trump offered to his devoted followers during his presidency and keeps on providing now as wannabe all-American leader. Both men addressing a fan base they created single-handedly over a decade or so with their celebrity aura via the help of either owned, supportive or sympathetic media outlets demonstrated a "symbolically mediated performance"[8] typical of most populist leaders. As the definition goes further, the very nature of the populist style can be seen as a mixture of public stints, bravados, showdowns and celebrity appearances aimed at various audiences involving them in a narrative that blurs the borders between politics, government and everyday life.[9]

Of course, neither the scope, nor the methods of both leaders are entirely comparable, though their end goal is – gaining control over the government through the respective mechanisms of the institutional framework, then, waging an all-out war against the very same norms, regulations, governmental bodies and institutions. This is how they understand the normalization of politics today – destroying the sacred

[7] Moffitt, *Global Rise of Populism.*
[8] Moffitt, *Global Rise of Populism*, 13.
[9] Moffitt, *Global Rise of Populism*, 46.

democratic rules of common sense, mediated public consensus, trust in the rule of law and its domain over the deeds of all members of the general public, maintaining the system of checks and balances between the three branches of government. The digitalization of public communication was a God-given gift to them as they only needed to choose whichever social platform would deliver their angry personal attacks and labeling messages, which they call policies. That would not have been possible without the phenomenon of the political enemy concept revived to dramatic effect under president Trump.

How and why was this concept brought back to light? Well, it is nothing new to the world of polarized politics; however, in the Facebook, Instagram and Twitter era, it became a widespread manner of public communication. Users all over the so-called social media started depicting people whom they tend to severely disagree with as enemies. Unfortunately, due to the dynamics of the communication flow and its transgression into everyday life which reflected conventional mainstream media outlets, that narrative became a paradigm. So naturally, we moved further beyond simple linguistic convenience to see such terms used these days quite deliberately to picture individual or group viewpoints or ideas that one finds totally incompatible with their own.

As a consequence of the digitalization of communication that for many actors meant bypassing the traditional media gatekeepers and their censure, politicians of all colors swiftly jumped on the new opportunity to communicate instantly with thousands of potential voters, who, prior to the age of smart devices, were well beyond their reach. It no longer cost a fortune to address a potential target group, test a slogan or just make a statement of whatever sorts. What is needed is just a smart device, a decent Internet connection and something to say. Everything else was a matter of a few hundred characters or a video recording which reached millions upon millions around the in no time globe. The splash effect of social platforms is what actually made them a hit and a producer of news.

So, it was a matter of adaptation to the new reality of communication. And it seems that the political style of populism was the one that took the lead. What better way than aggressively and brutally oversimplifying the

world we live in and picturing it in black and white? How easy labelling individuals, groups, preferences, interests and behavior alike became! Just reach out and touch the screen of your smart phone! Enter the age of post-truth! Reason and common sense are kicked out. No debate, no compromise, no consensus. Denial and rejection of everything and everyone that does not share 100% of your beliefs, for arguments matter no more. The very nature of the Enlightenment came under scrutiny and knowing through study was no longer enough to prevail in a debate, for no one seemed to listen to the empirical evidence and proof. Instead, they gladly preferred lending an ear to the sensational and bombastic, loudest, most emotional voice in the room, or on Facebook/Twitter.

Last but not least, because of the strident tomes of personalized emotional narratives and appeals to a long-term competition with old political foes for influence over the course of society's political agenda, everything transformed accordingly from electoral competition into electoral warfare. And when at war, all means are justified and allowed to achieve victory. So, under the good old French banner, *à la guerre comme à la guerre* (in time of hardship you have to make the best of things)!

So, this is how the age of post-truth general talk translates into politics – politicians turn to emotions bypassing almost any reason for the sake of winning without worrying about the long-term effects on the political system at all. Sadly, it is no wonder that people bought into the new rhetoric and now instead of a political competition based on tolerance, respect for diversity and clash of viewpoints and ideas, we simply have a desire for obliterating the enemy. For it is way easier to deny and cancel something rather than approach it through critical thinking and give it the benefit of the doubt. The gruesome reality affected everything and everyone in politics… and not only.

The political parties were the first victims of the political style of populism. Not only did they suffer from the lack of any political principles *per se* within the presumed "thin ideology" per Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017), but they were equally affected from right to left by the new style of approaching governmental issues and institutional frameworks. And beyond any doubt, the parties of the democratic political systems suffered

the most. However, as Moffit (2016) demonstrated in his research, it is hard to unequivocally declare whether populism is good or bad for democracy, as there are too many specifics and too many variables to be taken into consideration before drawing such a general conclusion.

And what better examples than two quite different forms of democratic polity than Bulgaria and the US to demonstrate that statement? But before pointing out the similarities, we need to pay more attention to some past and recent contextual developments in Bulgaria, since those that led to Trump's ascent to power are well known to the general public. Once the stage is set, drawing parallels will be much easier and plausible and less speculative as the US system of checks and balances is world-renowned for its efficiency while the Bulgarian one is still a work in progress and much closer to façade democracy rather than a well-functioning one.

Bulgaria, a member of the EU for less than 15 years, is a country with a troubled transition from communism to democracy, marred by the long hand of the former Secret services of the party-state along with pre-arranged mass privatization and widespread traditional practices of severe nepotism and clientelism that the democratic political system still finds hard to overcome and obliterate. That controversial legacy and the popular disappointment in the parties along the transition process, which failed to deliver on the promises of not only joining the West in its elite club but becoming like the West, led to widespread leaning towards the only other model being known around the country – that of the strong leader and the party-state. As a result, since 2001, but especially after 2009, the government has been formed by one major party and its leader, a former member of the security forces and rumored-participant in the setup of the mafia underworld in Bulgaria, Boyko Borisov and his GERB party.

Throughout his decade as prime minister, Borisov enjoyed media-cushioned political comfort and did not face any serious challenge to his dominant position, excluding a short break of a couple of months in 2013-2014, when he lost the snap elections, and an unexpected coalition was formed against his dominance, until the early spring of 2021. Despite a relatively successful presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2018, alongside some huge infrastructure development projects in the country,

GERB started losing its public support as massive discontent sparked by rumors that the state had been captured by a few close associates of Borisov started to spread. Even though all major media outlets were either controlled by sympathetic entities or via third party individuals directly controlled by Borisov's political allies, his positions were undermined by a conflict with the incumbent president Radev, whom he had personally fired from the army not so long ago.

All these years since the election of Radev, which came as a surprise and was used as a reason for Borisov to call his second snap elections in 2017, there has been a severe public antagonism between the two men. Unfortunately for Borisov, Radev proved to be somewhat of a successful and quick student of the democratic playbook well forgotten by the leader of GERB. So instead of keeping it all personal, which was and is the preferred political style of Borisov, Radev turned to the general public on the back of his election victory and started intervening in the government's agenda on a regular basis, making comments and taking symbolic actions, as the office of the president has limited, but quite broad functions, against the governmental practices of GERB and Borisov. Not used to such attacks, Borisov apparently lost his nerve and started making atypical mistakes in the decision-making process of the government, either through unsuccessful appointments to key public institutions or by making highly controversial decisions.

His populist style started losing the aura of invincibility and all-deliverer as the public started asking more and more questions about key issues such as the management of EU funds and their allocation through set-up public calls too close to government companies; the economic recovery of the state in terms of incomes, pensions and other social benefits; the highly advertised infrastructure development projects which were run by the same companies with connections to the government and subject to constant public discontent as they kept falling apart or lacked quality of construction; not to forget the general healthcare strategy of managing the outbreak of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Overall, state institutions appeared to take measures or at least pretended to by calling commissions, registering calls, starting investigations, calling on the supposed perpetrators but to no other effect than publicity. The final straw was the scandalous raid of the

president's office on the prosecutor general's command, seen by the Bulgarian public as a strong ally of Borisov. Being unable to deflect the public rage that followed in the form of mass protests across the country in the summer of 2020, Borisov started blaming everyone around but especially the president for attempting *a coup d'état* and destabilizing the country during hard times.

The miscalculation was that, after all the years of relative public comfort, the citizens got fed up with his one-man show and the party-state led by GERB backfired and significantly eroded the support for Borisov and his party. Overall, Bulgarians demonstrated that they had lost their patience with the institutions which, in theory only, were democratic, while in practice, were politicized and party-owned, much like during the communist past. Being a member state of the EU and NATO was apparently not enough for the citizens who demonstrated in large numbers against the privatization of some sectors of the government, the lack of transparency in the management of public funds, scandalous appointments all around the governmental hierarchy and finally the lack of an unbiased judicial system and efficient public prosecution undermining the principle of the rule of law.

However, GERB did not lose its leading position in the regular elections held in April 2021, and retained 25 parliamentary seats ahead of TSP, which came second during their first ever participation in elections as a party. The situation, as described earlier, unfolded without further surprises and snap elections were scheduled for less than three months later. Logically, this time GERB changed places with TSP because, regardless of the efforts of all parties involved, Borisov did not lose that much public support to become a peripheral figure in Bulgarian politics.

However, what was surprising was the lowest ever electoral participation in parliamentary elections ever recorded in the democratic history of the country – 42,2%.[10] Unfortunately, none of the political agents managed to get why Bulgarians did not show up in larger numbers in spite of the urge and the opportunity to remove Borisov and his party from the political arena once and for all. Holding elections, not to mention snap ones

[10] As per the results published by the Bulgarian Central Electoral Commission, https://results.cik.bg/pi2021_07/aktivnost/index.html, accessed August 2021.

in such a short time, is always a risky enterprise especially in the middle of summer. It was not the temptation to oust Borisov from power that did not work as an electoral and public lure for the citizens. It was that, after a few months of a different government than Borisov's, even though appointed by the president and not elected by the people, the voters had the chance to adjust their political perspective. And through that lens, they were able to see that what the leader of TSP, Trifonov, was offering them was more of the same and not a substantial or radical reform.

Since his early days as a public figure, Trifonov was known for his strong positions on hot issues quite often expressed cynically and using rough language. His celebrity status was forged over the years on TV by building artistic appeal through spectacular concerts and widely popular music recordings, some of which – remakes of folklore and ethnic songs – gained iconic status. With a large fan base and followed every weekday evening for the past 20 years, he expressed his strong views and brought all the powerful man and women of the day under severe scrutiny, regardless of their positions, next to the guests he hosted in his TV show. This made Trifonov the man who blurred the boundary between public and private life. To a huge extent, it is because of him that the language predominantly used by almost all public figures in Bulgaria today is a street-like speech full of slang, lacking politeness and respect for the individual or different viewpoint. The resemblance to Trump is all but accidental.

The list of similar techniques and approaches is long when looking at the cases of Trifonov and Trump. However, the same can be said about many other political wannabe leaders of both democratic and non-democratic political systems. The major difference is that the latter do not have to bother, or at least pretend that they care for institutions, rules and citizens' rights. The most striking similarity between Trifonov and Trump is their attitude towards political parties. Bearing in mind that both operate in a democratic political environment, though with very different substance, history and traditions, turning on political parties as enemies of the people while at the same time being the driving forces of democracy is somewhat complicated. But this tactic has its logic and it is very sound and plausible.

It is parties that rob the people of their sovereignty in running their country and everyday life the way they deserve to be looked after. Parties support each other and repel every challenge to oust them from power by either assimilating the outside attack or by discrediting the agents involved. Parties construct and maintain the status quo in such a manner as to benefit big businesses, large multinational enterprises and private companies rather than the commoners, the people. Parties thus become agents of foreign, outside interests and do not care about the real life of the real man. Parties conspire with each other to keep their hold on the state regardless of who wins the elections. Elections are shambles and schemes. Parties are cartels and together with the big capital have captured the state and the power is no more with the actual sovereign. Bottom line, parties are evil and we must not trust or vote for them.

Interestingly, all populist leaders who operate within the domain of democracy at some point take over the existing one or start their own brand-new party. For sooner rather than later, the likes of Berlusconi (Forza Italia), Heider (Freedom Party), Grillo (M5S), Salvini (Liga), Farage (UKIP), Le Pen (National Rally), Tsipras (Syriza), Turrion (Podemos), Vilders (Vlaams Belang), Lucke/Gauland (AfD) or Abascal (VOX) and Trifonov (TSP) decide to overtake the system by storming its inner sanctum – the parliament. Once they get there, depending on the support they received, they either keep on making political charades, bargain with the rest for supporting some extravagant issues and, what has most recently become the practice, enter the government in some form of coalition. The explanation for all the theatrics, metaphors, maneuverings and U-turns is actually quite simple regardless of the similar or different contexts, variety of explanatory and dependent variables – populists from all over Europe operating in a democracy soon realize that they must deliver on their promises.

Failing to do so means nothing less than political obliteration for them and their ambitions. And not surprisingly, most of them pull back on their revolutionary intentions and rhetoric, looking for ways to adjust the system to their benefit rather than simply trying to destroy it. In the end, all revolutionaries in a democracy understand that they can disagree and cry out loud their discontent with the way the society treats them or some issues

they find of major concern but it is exactly this democratic system that allows them the freedom to do so and destroying it will mean chaos. Arriving to this simple understanding is what saves and reinvigorates democracy, for the new political normal is not actually new. We have seen it manifesting itself in the 1960s and the 1970s, with the students uprising in France, during the 1980s with the mass union strikes across Europe and the US, during the wave of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe, in the 1990s and the end of the Cold War.

Each and every decade has its topics, hot issues and urgencies. Sometimes, these are old forgotten ones from the past, sometimes these are variations, and other times, very rarely, novel ones. The new normal in politics is a process that various political systems experience over time in their development. Whether it will be a change of the governmental model like in Russia, where president Putin assumes all power, or like in China, where chairman Sun is doing more or less the same things as his Russian counterpart in terms of cementing his personal grip on the government, or like in the US where president Trump contested the very driving mechanism of the US democracy – fair and public elections – elements of novelty either test the system and fail or become part of it. What matters is how we approach and estimate the "new," for every day is a new one and yet it is not that different from the previous one from the viewpoint of the Sun.

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List of abbreviations and the names of some Bulgarian political parties with transliteration included

GERB – /Grajdani za Evropeisko Razvitie na Balgaira/Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria, member of the European Peoples' Party;

DPS – /Dvijenie za Prava I Svobodi/ Movements for Rights and Freedom, member of the Alliance of Democrats and Liberals;

BSP – Bulgarian Socialist Party, member of the Party of the European Socialists;

ITN – /Ima Takav Narod/There is Such People

DB – /Demokratichna Balgaria/Democratic Bulgaria – alliance between Da, Bulgaria (Yes, Bulgaria), the Green Movement and Democrats for Strong Bulgaria, which is a member of EPP;

RUBGMO – /Izpravi se Balgaria! Mutri Van!/Rise Up BG! Mafia Out is a coalition between Movement 21, European Peoples Party and some prominent non-partisan representatives;

VMRO – traditional nationalists, anti-immigration and liberalization of rights of the minorities, pro-NATO, anti-EU centralization, paternalistic;

Attack – Ataka, ultra-left populists, pro-Russian, anti-EU and NATO;

NFSB – National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria, moderate traditionalism, nationalists, social and economic voluntarism, pro-centralized governmental involvement and less private initiative.

Looking Beyond the Wall: Immigration and Cultural Identity in the Relation between Post-Trump America and Europe

MARIA-MIHAELA STOICESCU

Introduction

Today's globalized world allows both individuals and entire populations to move more freely across borders. Although this enables greater worldwide cooperation in the form of international treaties and international awareness regarding the needs of certain countries, it also generates international threats such as the spread of the COVID-19 virus that turned into a pandemic.

Due to this greater mobility of individuals and populations, migration is flourishing. With more open borders there comes the issue of welcoming the Other. In his 1978 work, *Orientalism,* Edward Said defines *the Other* as "everything that lies outside of the self."[1] *The Self* is the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and *the Other* is strange (the Orient, the east, "them").[2] Different from us, speaking an unknown language and bringing along a new culture, the Other can represent a threat. Inevitably, the host-culture and the new culture will clash. However, the way in which this clash is resolved will determine whether the newcomers are a mortal threat or an enriching addition.

Considering the fact that migration represents a national and international matter, political leaders play most important part in dealing with these cultural clashes and their consequences for one's cultural and national identity. As the voice of the citizens' will, the way in which they

[1] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978), 144.

[2] Said, *Orientalism*, 43.

refer to the Other will influence the general opinion. Perhaps the most known example on this matter is former US President Donald J. Trump.

"Build the wall," when referring to immigrants, will remain Trump's presidential campaign *leitmotif* and the line that summarizes his administration. It can be said that it also summarizes the international discussion on immigration, with destination-countries, such as the United States, France or Great Britain pleading for a wall and source-countries, such as Romania, Mexico or Syria asking for a wider gate. Consequently, not only did Trump's political discourse regarding immigrants influence the way in which the American population related to its own immigrant cultural and national identity, but it echoed across Europe as well. Trump's anti-immigrant speeches represented the lifeline some European leaders needed to endorse their nationalist views and persuade the general population that immigrants are a threat to national identity and culture.

Consequently, in this chapter, I aim to highlight the way in which Trump's anti-immigrant political discourse influenced European political leaders' responses to the immigrant cultural identity of their countries and encouraged radical nationalist ideologies. In addition, I will try to search for an answer on whether or not the Biden administration can undo these effects on the transatlantic relations between the US and the EU.

However, before analyzing political discourses, there are some notions related to migration, cultural identity and nationalism that need further clarification.

Terminology

Oxford Dictionary defines *migration* as "the movement of large numbers of birds or animals from one place to another every year" or as "the movement of people to a new country or area in order to find work or better living conditions."[3] To differentiate it from animals migration, this movement of people within the borders of a country or between countries has been specifically defined as *human migration.* Encyclopedia Britannica

[3] *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary,* s.v. "Migration, n.," https://www.oxfordlearners dictionaries.com/definition/english/migration, accessed July 27, 2021.

defines *human migration* as "the permanent change of residence by an individual or group; it excludes such movements as nomadism, migrant labor, commuting, and tourism, all of which are transitory in nature."[4] The Encyclopedia continues by giving a detailed account of the different shapes that human migration can take: "Migrations fall into several broad categories. First, internal and international migration may be distinguished. Within any country there are movements of individuals and families from one area to another (for example, from rural areas to the cities), and this is distinct from movements from one country to another. Second, migration may be voluntary or forced. Most voluntary migration, whether internal or external, is undertaken in search of better economic opportunities or housing. Forced migrations usually involve people who have been expelled by governments during war or other political upheavals or who have been forcibly transported as slaves or prisoners. Intermediate between these two categories are the voluntary migrations of refugees fleeing war, famine, or natural disasters."[5]

A form of international human migration from one country to another, *immigration* is defined as "process through which individuals become permanent residents or citizens of another country."[6] Consequently, the people involved in this process who leave their countries and become permanent residents of another country are known as *immigrants*.

As it can be concluded, from the description offered by Encyclopedia Britannica on human migration, people (individuals or families) can choose to leave their countries for a number of reasons or can be pushed/forced to do so. Thereby, immigrants can fall into different legal and social categories defined by the host-countries. This represents the first issue that an immigrant has to deal with when arriving in a new country: the legality of their presence there.

However, upon solving the legal matters, and even before that, an immigrant will have to face the stereotypes and prejudices of the new

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[4] The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Human Migration," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated March 24, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/human-migration.

[5] Encyclopedia Britannica, "Human Migration."

[6] Sarah Parry, "Immigration," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated October 2, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/topic/immigration.

culture, as well as those of their own culture. On the one hand, *culture*, in a nutshell, is the set of norms, customs and traditions, clothes, food and, generally, the way of living specific to a group of people, be it a nation, a country or a smaller group, based on their occupation, gender, hobbies or interests. Although one can think about Arabic culture, for example, there is also a hippie culture or a pop culture, specific to groups of people, regardless of their countries.

An important part of one's identity, culture and sense of self are strongly connected, as identifying with a culture, that is with a group of people, which shapes our sense of self, our set of values, the norms that we follow and so forth. For Stuart Hall, cultural identity is "A matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past."[7]

In the contemporary world, the physical borders between countries have become only lines on a map, and identifying with a new culture or adopting it as your own has never been easier. For all that, when people from different cultural backgrounds do not see eye to eye on certain matters, there will be a clash of cultures, deeply rooted in the cultural identity of each of them. These conflicts can occur between individuals, between individuals and countries or even on an international scale between nations. Thus, as culture is an important part of one's identity, compromising or accepting the Other can seem an act of losing one's self. Such a feeling generates fear that, in turn, can be directed towards hateful behaviors, such as racism and discrimination.

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[7] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference,* ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 225.

Thereby, in portraying immigrants as a threat to national identity, political leaders can manipulate the general opinion towards rejecting or demonizing the newcomers and accepting a more conservative and protective view towards their country, known as a nationalist stance.

In his work, *Identity and Culture,* Chris Weedon argues that the national consciousness, i.e., the shared national identity, is a social construct that can be easily directed towards achieving different goals. Thus, he implies the role of political actors in guiding the perception of public opinion regarding social matters: "Identities may be socially, culturally and institutionally assigned, as in the case, for instance, of gender or citizenship, where state institutions, civil society and social and cultural practices produce the discourses within which gendered subjectivity and citizens are constituted. Often they solicit active identification on the part of the subject so defined. (…) In the case of citizenship, an elaborate bureaucracy monitors and allocates the markers of citizenship, for example, birth certificates, passports and electoral registers. National anthems, sung at official state occasions and at cultural and sports events, seek to recruit subjects, drawing on emotional as well as rational forms of identification in order to interpellate individuals as citizens of a particular nation. In the cases of both gender and national identity, a wide range of social practices come into play in recruiting subjects to identify with the identities on offer. The meaning of a particular social practice, for example, the singing of a national anthem, is, however, never fixed. It will change according to the context in which it is used."[8]

He continues by adding that national identity represents a shared reality built on the belief in a shared culture and, more often than not, a shared history. Hence, nationalist discourses usually make use of this shared attributes to appeal to the public.

When fear is fueled, triggered by the unknown that is the Other, our "fight or flight instinct" can turn us towards hateful and violent behaviors, such as racism and discrimination. A familiar notion to all of us, *racism* represents "a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits

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[8] Chris Weedon, *Identity and Culture* (New York: Open University Press, 2004), 6.

and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race."[9] Racist remarks, behaviors and policies can be based on anything from a belief in racial superiority to cultural superiority, also known as *cultural racism*.

As it can be noticed, an immigrant's struggles when coming to a new country go beyond legal matters. It is a constant battle for acceptance and coming to terms with the host-country's cultural and national identity. At the same time, the way in which the general population comes to terms with the newcomers' cultural and national identity is deeply influenced by their own national identity and the way they relate to it. Consequently, political leaders that are open to change and admit their nations' immigrant roots will drive populations to be more accepting and tolerant, while political leaders that support their nations' pride by denying its immigration past will drive populations to deny the access of the Other in an attempt to protect national identity and their own self.

The "Parekh Report on The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain," published in October 2000, which questions the history and tradition of Britishness, makes an interesting point regarding the relation between a nation's history and its national identity. Although the report handles aspects of the English, Scottish and Welsh history, its findings can be applied worldwide. The report states that more often than not, the historical narrative that sustains national identity is a story of glory that forgets or simplifies the so called "ugly bits" and complex parts of the nation's history: "A sense of national identity is based on generalizations and involves a selective and simplified account of a complex history. Much that is important is ignored, disavowed or simply forgotten. Many complicated strands are reduced to a simple task of essential and enduring national unity, with everything in past history leading inexorably up to a triumphal conclusion."[10]

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[9] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Racism n.," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism, accessed July 27, 2021.

[10] Bhikhu Parekh, *Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (London: Profile Books, 2000), 16.

These aspects lead us to President Trump's problematic claims. If we consider the Urban Dictionary definition of *immigrant*: "What every inhabitant of the USA is, except the Native Americans,"[11] one could claim that by nature the United States should welcome all who come to its territory with open arms.

If we focus on identity and cultural issues, during his administration, President Trump denied the immigration past of America and immigrants' major role in building the nation. All in all, being a major political actor of international importance, his claims could not refer only to the US, he had to advise Europe as well.

Trump, immigrants and Europe

Before proceeding to analyze Trump's discourse and tweets, it is important to mention that the United States have not only a complex history when it comes to immigration, but also a very rich history when it comes to tackling this issue and coming to terms with their cultural and national identity. Before the Trump era, another important event related to immigrants was the 9/11 attack on the twin towers. In *Culture and Identity*, Chris Weedon argues that such events represented the necessary circumstances to promote right wing-nationalist agendas and restrict the access of immigrants, on top of demonizing even more the general perception of the Other, not only in the US, but all over the world: "Perceived threats from the West's 'others' have profoundly affected mainstream politics in Western countries, setting the agenda not only for the right, but also for center and center-left parties. The events of 11 September have been used to justify emergency laws that allow a range of repressive measures towards those defined as suspect aliens, including, in some states, imprisonment without trial. Migration from the developing world has been met by xenophobic policies and campaigns, which do not only target poor or unskilled migrants."[12]

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[11] *The Urban Dictionary,* s.v. "Immigrant n.," October 22, 2006, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=immigrant.

[12] Weedon, *Identity and Culture,* 13.

Taking this into consideration, it is no wonder that the claims of the U.S. President take on an international importance and can have a great impact on how the clash between different cultural and national identities and immigration policies are resolved.

Back in 2018, in a joint press conference with British Prime Minister Theresa May, outside of London, when asked about the impact of immigration on Europe, then US President Donald Trump stated that: "I think it's been bad for Europe. I know Europe very well and it's been tough. We've seen some terror attacks. I just think it's changing the culture and is very negative for Europe and Germany — I have a great relationship with Angela Merkel, but it's hurt Germany and other parts of Europe. It's not politically-correct to say that, but I'll say it and say it loud. Look at what's happening to different countries that never had problems — it's a very sad situation. It's not good for Europe and it's not good for our country. We have very bad immigration laws. We're doing incredibly well considering we virtually don't have immigration laws — I don't even call them laws, you just walk across the border and then you're tied in a lawsuit for five years."[13]

A day before the joint press conference, in an interview with the British tabloid newspaper *The Sun,* he made a number of affirmations regarding immigrants and their impact on Europe and its society and culture: "So I think allowing millions and millions of people to come into Europe is very, very sad. […] I think you are losing your culture. Look around. You go through certain areas that didn't exist ten or 15 years ago."[14]

He went so far as to state that "Allowing the immigration to take place in Europe is a shame."[15] Known for his anti-immigrants stance and his vocal and extremist discourses on the subject, it came as no surprise to the usual observer that he deemed immigrants a threat once again. However,

[13] Politico Staff, "Full Text: Donald Trump-Theresa May Press Conference," *Politico*, July 13, 2018, https://www.politico.com/story/2018/07/13/full-text-theresa-may-trump-visit-transcript-718569.

[14] Tom Newton Dunn, "Donald Trump Says Britain Is 'Losing Its Culture' Because of Immigration," *The Sun,* July 13, 2018, https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/6766947/donald-trump-britain-losing-culture-immigration.

[15] Dunn, "Donald Trump."

critics warned that his usual behavior represented a "step closer to endorsing the far right's white nationalist views."[16]

"When world leaders adopt cultural racism in this way, they legitimize right-wing extremism," is what another British publication, *The Conversation*, stated about Trump's claims during his state visit.[17] In addition, the publication offers another example when Trump's involvement in such matters helped promote anti-immigrants agendas.

One such white nationalist group is Britain-First. Ruled by leader Paul Golding and deputy leader Jayda Frasen, the group defines itself as a political party and a street defense organization. Its ideology encourages persecution of minorities, targeting mostly Muslims. Although known for some real-life discriminatory events such as mosque invasions and marching with white crosses in neighborhoods with Muslim populations, the group's activity is mostly online.

Their posts range from memes with puppies to the usual call to action to the audience to "share and like" if they care about their nation. Consequently, most users of social networks interact with their posts without knowing what the group actually stands for. However, this particular group enjoyed a brief but important moment in the spotlight in 2017 when Donald Trump retweeted some of their videos that supposedly portrayed Muslims hurting citizens or destroying public property.

Although Trump's retweets and tweets have been a source of international humor for the four years of his presidency, the effects that White Nationalist or White Supremacist groups can have on the battle for equal opportunities are no joke. Weedon states in *Identity and Culture* that: "[…] though for many people White nationalist and White supremacist identities, and the discourses and organizations that produce them, may be

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[16] Heather Timmons, "Trump's Remarks on Immigrants in Britain Promote 'Cultural Racism,' Critics Warn," *QUARTZ*, July 13, 2018, https://qz.com/1327760/in-donald-trumps-sun-interview-and-meeting-with-theresa-may-he-warned-the-uk-against-immigration/.

[17] Chris Allen, "Trump's Claim that Europe is 'Losing its Culture' Is Racism – and It Must Be Challenged," *The Conversation*, July 13, 2018, https://theconversation.com/trumps-claim-that-europe-is-losing-its-culture-is-racism-and-it-must-be-challenged-99962?fbclid=IwAR3ow9qaYiSMCb-gIp4O tAW6Xx6gzuznLsHzcszR-MXCrQAEaFu2E88ttHI%20.

used strategically, their effects are much wider and more insidious. They have helped turn the tables in the struggle for equal opportunities."[18]

Retweeting comes with extra responsibility when you are a state leader. In retweeting their videos, whose legitimacy was questionable, Trump not only offered them as proof of the truth but encouraged their anti-Muslim campaign in the U.K. and further promoted anti-immigrants behaviors and stereotypes.

In the 2018 press conference during the British state visit, Trump's instance of cultural racism was somewhat balanced by Prime Minister Theresa May, who stated earlier in the press conference that: "The U.K. has a proud history of welcoming people who flee persecution or want to contribute to our economy and society. Over the years, immigration has been good for the U.K. What is important is we have control of our borders and a set of rules to determine who comes into our country."[19]

However, in spite of Trump's eulogy on U.S. and U.K.'s close and special relationship, in 2018 France was believed to be the President's favorite. The first European leader to visit the United States, French president Emanuel Macron, tried to build a partnership with the US. A "bromance," as it was called by publications, the close relationship that the two state leaders developed seemed quite worrisome for the world.

In contrast to Trump's allegations in 2018, Macron did not seem to change his opinion on immigrants. He continued to work towards a more inclusive and open Europe by signing two joint Declarations on Migration with Spanish President Pedro Sánchez later in July 2018.

Despite all this, in 2019, Macron's political discourse seemed to take a turn. In speaking to members of the French Parliament and Government in September 2019, he called for harsher measures to "look immigration in the face." This particular phrase reminds one of Donald Trump's rhetoric.

As one of the four priorities set by the French President for his second term, immigration is also a concern of the general population. In consequence, Macron also pointed out that the first to "suffer" because of immigration and misuse of asylum is the middle class: "I believe in the right

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[18] Weedon, *Identity and Culture,* 98.
[19] Politico Staff, "Trump-May Press Conference."

to asylum but it is diverted from its real purpose by networks, people who manipulate others. If we do not face this problem, we will suffer from it. This results in what? Neighborhoods where the number of unaccompanied minors is exploding."[20]

When addressing the United Nations at the 2019 climate summit, once again Macron adopted a more conservative position regarding immigration, implying that at the moment France is too attractive as a destination-state and in consequence, needs to adopt a sterner position regarding who it will welcome between its borders: "France cannot welcome everyone if it wants to do it right, to be able to welcome everyone with dignity, we must not be a too attractive country, I tell you very frankly."[21]

The newspaper *Le Figaro* revisited the French President's comments on this sensitive matter along the years and noted that the tone has surely changed: "The paper continued its review of Macron's past comments by noting that in 2016, presidential candidate Macron said he considered refugees as "a strength". In January 2017, he praised "Chancellor Angela Merkel and the German society as a whole for living up to our [European] common values ... by welcoming refugees in distress." In March 2017, candidate Macron was even clearer on the subject: "Contrary to what some say, we are not confronted to a wave of immigration. [...] The subject of immigration should not worry the French population. [...] Immigration is part of the world we live in. [...] Moreover, immigration happens to be an opportunity from an economic, cultural, social standpoint."[22]

Although Macron's shift regarding his response to the immigrant cultural identity of France can be blamed on different social and political changes, his political discourse starts to resemble that of President Trump. Besides, in an article for the Centre for Immigration Studies, Nayla Rush notes that Macron has turned on the Democratic party that seems to avoid the issue of immigration.[23]

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[20] Nayla Rush, "In an Echo of the U.S. Debate, French President Macron Calls for Tougher Stand on Immigration," *Center for Immigration Studies*, October 2, 2019, https://cis.org/Rush/Echo-US-Debate-French-President-Macron-Calls-Tougher-Stand-Immigration.

[21] Rush, "Echo of U.S. Debate."

[22] Rush, "Echo of U.S. Debate."

[23] Rush, "Echo of U.S. Debate."

It can be noted that, much like Trump, Macron implies in his political discourse the threat that immigrants represent for the country's well-being. However, in addressing the issue, the French President does not make use of cultural racism or implies that immigrants are a threat to national identity, he rather tries to comfort the general population by assuring them that he is aware of their concerns and will take measures.

The Biden administration

With a newly elected President and a mixed-race woman Vice-President, things are starting to look better for both America and the world. President Joe Biden seems to be trying to make peace between the American nation and its immigrant cultural identity, as well as improve the immigration system towards more humane practices.

At the same time, if we look back on Europe, immigration remains a sensitive topic and an issue for both leaders and citizens. However, following Brexit, current U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson appears to have stated that he is willing to overlook the state of illegal immigrants for some people: "When people have been here for a very long time and haven't fallen foul of the law, then it makes sense to try to regularize their status," Johnson told at a news conference on March 18, 2021, in London. He said this is "pretty much what already happens under the existing rules" but his comment suggests he's open to going further.[24]

Taking into account that the general population's anger towards immigrants was one of the catalysts of Brexit, as history unfolds, we will see whether the British nation can come to terms with its own immigrant identity.

Can the Biden administration undo these effects on the transatlantic relations between the US and the EU when it comes to immigration? Considering Biden's more humane and diplomatic approach to the issue, I believe the relationships between the two continents and political powers

[24] Tim Ross, Kitty Donaldson, "Boris Johnson Says He's Open to Amnesty for Some Migrants in U.K. Illegally," *Bloomberg,* March 18, 2021, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-03-18/johnson-backs-amnesty-for-well-behaved-illegal-migrants-in-u-k.

can be mended. In addition, they can learn from one another how to better manage welcoming the Other and coming to terms with new cultural and national identities. However, only time will tell what will be the outcome of the new presidential administration, its relationship with the European Union and its influence on European nations.

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"Let me from the outset commend the Faculty of European Studies of the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, and Professor Naumescu for this timely initiative. This conference takes place at the most appropriate moment as, with a new Administration in Washington, the decision-makers on both sides of the Atlantic are currently working diligently on renewing and strengthening the transatlantic partnership. We, in the EU, are encouraged by the positive signals received from Washington so far, and feel determined to continue our efforts in favor of giving a new impetus to the transatlantic relationship."

H.E. Klaus Werner Iohannis, the President of Romania

"I am very enthusiastic to attend this event and I will join President Iohannis in commending Professor Naumescu and the organizers for the substantial first edition of this annual conference. I am confident that this event will become a well-acknowledged landmark in addressing the most salient issues of international relations."

Professor **Bogdan Aurescu**, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania

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